



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

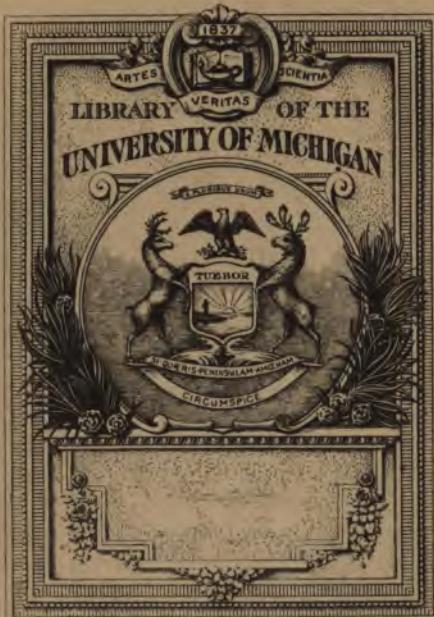
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





BX
1762
G 45
1818

A
PRESERVATIVE AGAINST POPERY,

IN SEVERAL

Select Discourses

UPON THE

PRINCIPAL HEADS OF CONTROVERSY

BETWEEN

PROTESTANTS AND PAPISTS:

BEING WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED

By the most eminent Divines of the Church of England,

CHIEFLY IN THE REIGN OF KING JAMES II.

COLLECTED BY

THE RIGHT REV. EDMUND GIBSON, D.D.

SUCCESSIVELY LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN AND LONDON,

[B. 1669, D. 1748.]

CAREFULLY REVISED AND EDITED

FOR THE BRITISH SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES
OF THE REFORMATION,

BY

THE REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D.

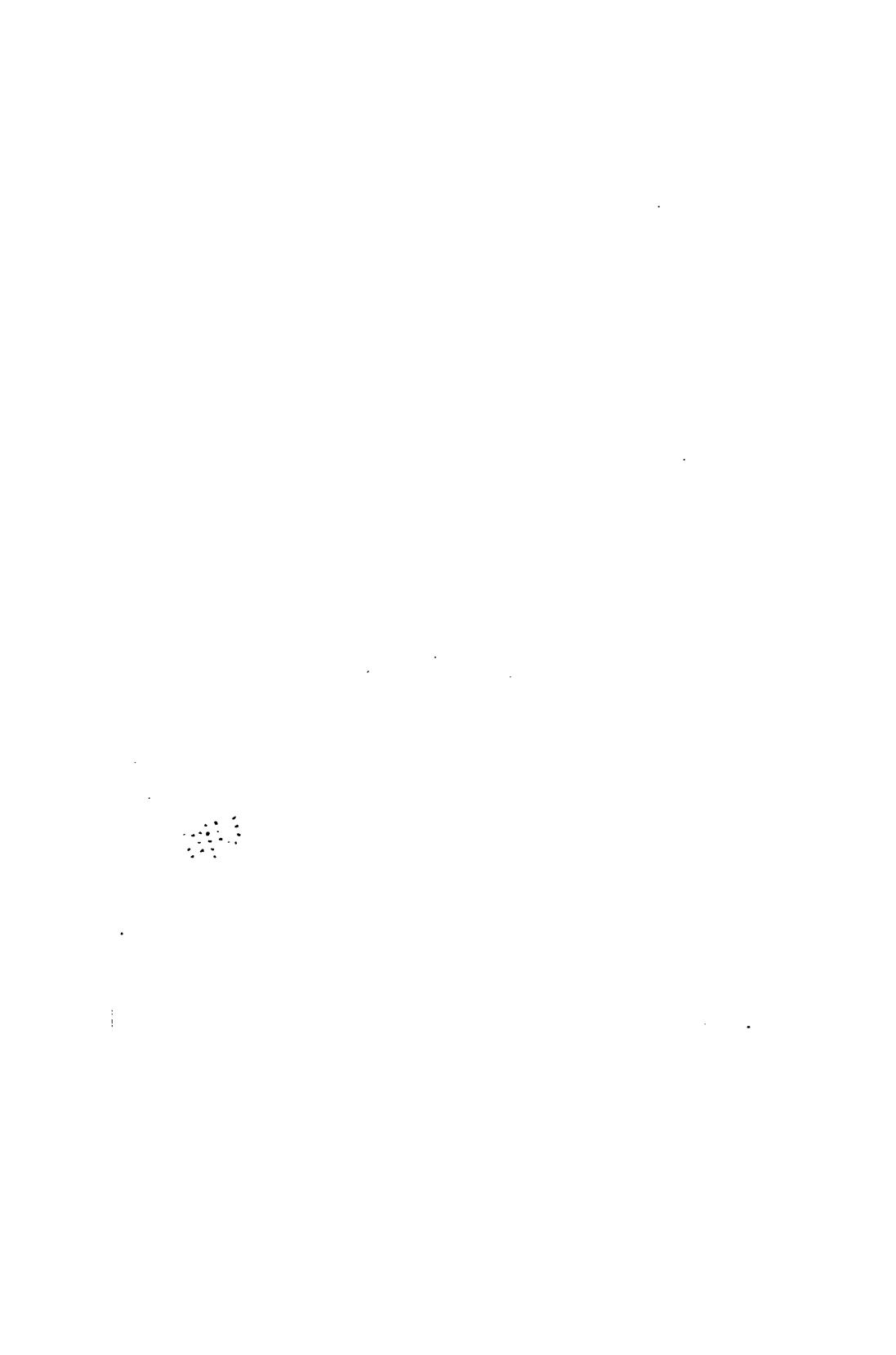
VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE SOCIETY'S OFFICE,

8, EXETER HALL, STRAND.

1848.



English
Pickering
6-14-28
17540

1-4-N & R. 11.4.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME IV.

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

CHAP. II.

THE POPISH NOTES OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED AND CONFUTED—(*continued.*)

	PAGE
X.—Tenth Note—Holiness of Life. By Dr. TENISON, late Arch ^{bis} h ^{op} of Canterbury	1687
XI.—Eleventh Note—The Glory of Miracles. By Mr. RESBURY, late Rector of Shadwell	1
XII.—Twelfth Note—The Light of Prophecy. By Dr. CLAGETT, late Preacher of Gray's Inn	39
XIII.—Thirteenth Note—The Confession of Adversaries. By Dr. KIDDER, late Bishop of Bath and Wells	55
XIV.—Fourteenth Note—The unhappy End of the Church's Enemies. By Dr. STRATFORD, late Bishop of Chester	73
XV.—Fifteenth Note—Temporal Felicity. By Dr. GROVE, late Bishop of Chichester	96

CHAP. III.

SAFETY OF SALVATION IN A PROTESTANT CHURCH.

I.—The Protestant Resolved, or the Unreasonableness of his turning Roman Catholic for Salvation. By Mr. ELLYS	1688
II.—A Discourse, shewing that Protestants are on the safer side, notwithstanding the uncharitable judgment of their adversaries; and that their Religion is the surest way to Heaven. By Mr. BEAULIEU	1687
	185

	PAGE
CHAP. IV.	
DANGER OF SALVATION IN THE CHURCH OF ROME.	
The Hazard of being saved in the Church of Rome. A Sermon. By Dr. TILLOTSON, late Archbishop of Canterbury	214
<hr/>	
THE POPISH RULE OF FAITH EXAMINED AND DISPROVED.	
BOOK I.	
THEIR DOCTRINE OF INFALLIBILITY.	
I.—A Discourse concerning a Guide in Matters of Faith, with respect, especially, to the Romish pretence of the necessity of such an one as is Infallible. By Dr. TENISON, late Archbishop of Canterbury	232
II.—Doubts concerning the Roman Infallibility. 1. Whether the Church of Rome believe it. 2. Whether Jesus Christ or his Apostles ever recommended it. 3. Whether the Primitive Church knew or used that way of deciding Controversies. By Dr. MAURICE, Chaplain to Archbishop Sancroft	271
III.—A Discourse concerning a Judge of Controversies in Matters of Religion; being an Answer to some Papers, &c. By Dr. SHERLOCK, late Dean of St. Paul's	309

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

CHAP. II.

THE POPISH NOTES OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED AND CONFUTED.—(CONTINUED.)

THE TENTH NOTE OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED, VIZ. HOLINESS OF LIFE.

Decima Nota est Sanctitas Vita Auctorum, sive primorum Patrum nostrae Religionis.—Bellar. de Notis Ecclesie, Lib. iv. cap. xiii.

IN this argument it may suffice, if it be shewn,

- I. *What the notion of Holiness is.*
- II. *That Holiness is not properly a Note of the true Church.*
- III. *That if it were a Note of the true Church, yet it would not so belong to the Roman, as to distinguish it from all other Churches; and to appear upon it as the infallible character of the only fold of Christ.*

I. For Holiness, it is of two kinds: holiness of calling and dedication; of mind and manners.

By holiness of calling and dedication, I mean the separation of persons from the unbelieving and wicked world; and the incorporating them, by baptism, into the spiritual society of the Christian Church: and, by such means, the dedicating of them to the service of Christ, according to the tenor of the evangelical covenant.

In this sense St. Paul told the members of the Church of Corinth,* that they were washed and sanctified; or, by their Christian calling or dedication, made sacred and holy.

* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

By holiness of mind and manners, to which Bellarmine here gives the name of probity (a virtue commended by him, but coldly obeyed), I understand the habitual, private and public practice of Christian religion, as it proceeds from the true principle of it, the love of God; as it is measured by the true rule of it, right reason in conjunction with the revealed will of God: and as it is directed to its proper ends, the glory of God, and the good of all reasonable creatures. For this kind of holiness, St. Paul* makes pious application to God in behalf of the Thessalonians, saying, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now,

II. Neither of these kinds of holiness can be properly called a note of the true Church.

For the first kind; it is confessed that the Christian Church is holy, and it was called *holy* in the Creed, before the epithet of Catholic was inserted into that sum of faith.† And the supreme Pastor of the Church loved it in such extraordinary manner, that "He gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word" [by baptism, and assent to the doctrine and conditions of the Gospel], "that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" [any thing which may seem uncomely to Christ, to whom she as supreme Head is united]: "that it should be holy, and without blemish."‡

This holiness of dedication is elegantly set forth (after the manner of the oriental poesy) in the book of the Canticles, in which is represented the spiritual marriage of Christ, and his chaste and unblemished Church. Though some Romanists have wrested these and other places, which speak of her dove-like and undefiled nature, and apply them to that which they please to call the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin.§ So ready are they who upbraid the Reformed with interpreting

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

† S. Cypr. Epist. 70. p. 190. [Ox. 1682.] — cum dicimus; [h. e. Baptizandis] Credis in vitam æternam, et remissionem peccatorum per sanctam Ecclesiam?

‡ Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.

§ V. Coton Preuves par l'Ecriture du contenu en la Foy catholique, p. 4, at the end of "Institution Catholique." Tome II. Paris. 1610.

Scripture out of their own heads, to do the same thing themselves, and with a much greater mixture of extravagance.

That the Church is holy we daily profess. Nevertheless such holiness of the Church cannot properly be called a note of it, for it appertains to its essence and constitution, and shews what a Church is, and belongs to every Church, whether Greek, Abyssinian, Roman, or English ; and is not (according to Bellarmine's sense of a note) an external mark by which we may distinguish betwixt Churches, and upon grounds of good assurance, discern any true one from such as are false.

For the second kind of holiness, that of mind and manners ; neither is that, so far as man can take cognizance of it, a certain sign by which we may find out the true Christian society. For,

First, The officers of the Christian Church invite men of all nations and conditions to come into the bosom of it, and admit them upon their profession of the common Christianity, not being able to penetrate into the secrets of their hearts, or to foresee whether they who are now in good earnest, will persevere or fall away. They may, therefore, admit into the true fold such as are wolves in sheep's clothing. For Novatian himself did not deny that men could be secretly wicked before and at baptism, though he was so rigid as not to believe the sins committed after it, to be forgiven. Hence our Saviour compared his Church to a net which contained in it good and bad fishes. And the bad may either soon appear, or be long concealed under the close veil of hypocrisy. So deceitful a mark of incorruption in the monument, is the superficial whiteness and ornament of it. Bellarmine himself does here furnish us, from Theodore, with the instance of Nestorius, who by the help of a pale look, set speech, and grave apparel, deceived both the people and the officers of the Church ; and, by such arts, lifted himself into an episcopal chair. "Now he is not a Christian who is merely one outwardly ; neither is that complete baptism which is outwardly only in the flesh : but he is a Christian, who is also one inwardly ; and baptism is that which is likewise inward in the Spirit, whose praise is not only of men, but of God."

Besides, where there is no such gross hypocrisy, there may be a specious show of holiness, not uniform and entire, yet proceeding from devout temper, some seeds of natural reason, and some few principles of Christian religion, whilst the rest are not embraced. Thus it was with the sect of Priscillian, who by

some kinds of real strictnesses, upbraided the looseness of that age. Yet the catholic Christians did not, from the regularity of their lives, infer the soundness of their party.

Likewise there are some practices which both the persons and the spectators judge to be holy, which are not so. Such a practice was that of Ignatius Loyola,* who gave an alms readily to a poor man, and to all the rest, who upon that poor man's report, pressed immediately upon him, till he had emptied all his stock, and was forced, that night, to beg bread for himself. This charity, how indiscreet soever it was, moved the poor to cry out with much admiration, as storied Maffei,

"A saint, a saint."

Seeing then, the weak will mistake the very nature of holiness, and the most judicious can only see the external part of it, it is not safe arguing for the goodness of the cause from the seeming goodness of the life. It is true, we ought to use a judgment of charity: but, in a case, where we are proving our faith, it becomes us to proceed upon more unquestionable grounds.

Secondly, Under the same constitution, people may live sometimes with more, and sometimes with less morality: if therefore we should prove the state or Chnrch by the manners of the members, the same constitution, at different times, would be good and bad, and vary as men do. Bellarmine speaks of the holiness of doctrine, and the efficacy of it; but it is not irresistibly efficacious: and often we find worse men under better means, and better men under worse. Thus it falls out in civil societies, where the model remaining or being improved, the virtues of the subjects decline. It did so towards the latter end of the Roman empire, in which, though the laws remained, the dregs of Romulus began to rise again. Thus it was in the Church of Israel, which was always, as God had framed it, a true Church. But if holiness of life had been made a note of it, it might, in some junctures, have been called a Church, but oftener no Church at all: before their captivity, there was a general corruption of manners; and their reformation, upon their deliverance, was imperfect: and the sense of God's goodness to them began to wear off; and though they did forbear to adulterate the worship of the true God with mixtures of idolatry, yet they admitted of the formal religion of the Pharisees, which made void real and solid piety; insomuch that when our Saviour visited the world, he could scarce find any probity in it.

* Maffei in vita Ignat. l. 1. p. 74, 75.

There are many ways, by which men, under the same constitution, may lead more or less virtuous lives; such are, the good or bad examples of great men; strict or loose discipline; affliction or over-growth in wealth and power; war or peace. And the last of these is too often, though not the just cause, yet the occasion of security, and of the growing of a kind of slothful rust upon those who are at ease. St. Cyprian,* speaking of the little quiet the African Church had for a few years (from Severus to Decius), though not without some trouble from the heathens, complains of the corruption which it bred among Christians.

Thirdly, Add to this, that unless a man do first understand the nature and doctrine of the Christian Church, he cannot know what sanctity is, and what that is in the life of any man, which he is to take for the holiness of a Christian. So that the way to be well assured about a true Church, is to take our measures, not from the lives of the members, but from the doctrines of their society. And one might imagine that Cardinal Perron himself,† in this argument, had more regard to the doctrine than the life, when he alluded to an expression in the Canticles, in this fanciful manner: "The Church sings, and will sing to the end of the world, I am black, but I am fair; that is to say, I am black in manners, but fair in doctrine." Which blackness of manners, if he intended as a spot of beauty upon his fair doctrine, he did not see with Christian eyes. But,

III. Admitting that holiness of life were a note of the true Church, the Roman Church would not, from this concession, derive any great advantage. It is true, and it is granted,

First, That at the beginning, the Christians at Rome were famous both for their faith and manners. And no man, that I know of, asperseth Linus, the first bishop there; who, as Platina saith, had a mighty reputation for sanctity, and died a glorious martyr under Saturninus the Consul. But the like may be alleged in favour of the mother-church of Jerusalem, and of St. James the bishop of it. In the mean while, it may be noted, that in Rome, it being the imperial city, there was a very early affectation of such superiority as Christ forbade in his kingdom: and St. Hierom, at the same time that he takes notice of the right faith of Rome (for then it was con-

* S. Cypr. Serm. de Lapsiss. p. 123. Ox. [1682.] — Pax longa corrupterat jacentem fidem, et pene dixeram dormientem, &c.

† Cardinal Perron's Reply to King James, l. 4. c. 6.

tained within the limits of the Apostles' Creed),* he reproves that ambition which had seated itself in purple on the seven hills. And this leaven had before that time swelled the contentious Popes, Victor and Stephen.

Secondly, It must be farther acknowledged, that in the later ages, there have been men of their communion devoutly inclined and of good morals. But this effect has not had Popery for its cause, but has been derived from principles common to all Christians. And it is from the influence of the first twelve Articles, and not of the additional ones of Trent, that such men have been so pious and so free from blemish. In this number are usually put Thauler and Savanarola. And it appears by their words, that mere Romanism was not the spring from which their devotions flowed.

"There† be many," saith Thauler, "who go under the name of religious, who take great pains in set-fasts, vigils, orisons, and frequent confessions: for they believe they may be justified and saved merely by such external works." For Savanarola, his spirit may be discerned by such discourse as this:‡ "I never was delighted with such books as the Revelations of St. Bridget, or Abbot Joachim. I never read the former; and the latter very sparingly.—The reading of the Old and New Testament pleaseth me so much, that for many years I have used no other book, disgusting, as I may say, other writings. Not that I despise them, but that in comparison of the Scriptures, all such sweet things taste to me as bitter." Neither,

Thirdly, Have the Reformed so much of the Pharisee as to justify themselves, and say, that in all their field there has not been a tare. But the men have been in fault, and not the cause. God be merciful to us sinners; greater sinners than some others upon one account, inasmuch as we offend against clearer light. Yet it may be here noted, that Bellarmine has put into his catalogue of sinners, Simon Magus, Valentine, Marcion, Montanus, and such others as do not at all belong to us; and that he and other Romanists misrepresent Luther, blackening of him with slanderous art, and then exposing him as a perfect Ethiopian. He was, indeed, a man of warm

* S. Hieron. Epist. ad Marcellam, p. 127. [Ep. 46. vol. 1. p. 206. Veron. 1734.]

† Thauler. in Fest. de uno aliquo Confess. Luc. 11.

‡ Compend. Revelat. Savan. p. 271, 272, 273.

temper and uncourtly language: but (besides that he had his education among those who so vehemently reviled him) it may be considered, whether in passing through so very rough a sea, it was not next to impossible for him not to beat the insulting waves till they foamed again.

He had his infirmities, but his are taken notice of, whilst more candour is shewed to men of great name, and well nigh equal heat. To omit the fierce words which passed betwixt St. Chrysostom and Epiphanius, St. Jerome and Ruffinus; it is manifest that Lucifer, bishop of Calaris in Sardinia (who was much esteemed by Pope Liberius, and who is called Holy Lucifer, according to the style of the time in which he lived), wrote books against his own Emperor Constantius, which were one entire invective. And when (for instance sake) he pleased to call him, "Most impudent Emperor,"* I suppose he had not a better talent than Luther in the address of courts. There was therefore something else which sharpened the tongues and pens of many against Luther: Erasmus tells us, "That† he perceived the better any man was, the more he relished the writings of Luther. That his very enemies allowed him to be a man of good life. That he seemed to him to have in his breast certain eminent evangelical sparks. That it was plain that some condemned those things in Luther's writings, which in St. Austin's and St. Bernard's works passed for orthodox and pious."

The same Erasmus pointed to the true reason of this usage of Luther.‡ He said he had two faults: "He touched the monks' bellies, and the Pope's crown."

There have been much worse men than Luther in all parties, and particularly in the Roman Church, which, if inquisition were made for a society by the marks of holy life, would not, above all others, be taken hold of. And,

First, Thus much may appear from the complaints of corruption in the Latin Church, made, in so many places, by so many considerable persons, and with such deep resentment.

Many books have been professedly written upon that subject: such as those of Clemangis, of the corrupt state of the

* *Luc. Calar. ad Constant. pro S. Athan. p. 25. l. 1. Responde Imperator Impudentissime, &c. p. 39. Filius Pestilentiae, &c. p. 102. Qui sis non solum mendax sed homicida.*

† *Erasm. Epist. ad Albert. Episc. et Prin. Mogunt. Cardin. p. 584, 585. [vol. 3. p. 514. Lugd. Bat. 1703.]*

‡ *Carion. in Chron. Auct. a Peuc. l. 5. [p. 937. Genev. 1625.]*

Church; of Alvarez Pelagi, of the Plainet of the Church; of Pius Mirandula, concerning the Reformation of the Church, offered to the Fathers of the Council of Lateran; and of Petrus de Aliaco, cardinal of Cambrai, presented by him in the Council of Constance. Others have, in particular places, though not in an entire work, given vent to their grievances upon the like occasion.

How black are the characters which are given of the state of the Latin Church by Baronius,* by Bellarmine,† by Genebrard,‡ about the year 900, and so forwards for more than an hundred years. Baronius speaks of monsters intruded into the Holy See, and by the help of monsters. For such were John X. and Theodora who advanced him. Bellarmine represents the Popes of those times as degenerating from the piety of their predecessors, of which some had no very great share. And he says, that in the west, and almost all the world over (and especially amongst those who were called the faithful), faith had failed; and that there was no fear of God among them. He mentions the vision of Pachomius the abbot, who, it seems, saw monasteries increasing, and piety decreasing. And he applies the vision to his age; and, upon that occasion, he useth the words of the prophet, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, but not increased their joy." Genebrard reports, that for almost one hundred and fifty years, the Popes were rather Apostatical than Apostolical. So dismal a state of things might, if he had pleased, been reproved more solemnly than with a chime of words. St. Bernard§ thus laments, and reproves the looseness of his age: "Woe to this generation, because of hypocrisy; if that may be called hypocrisy, which

* Baron. Annal. ad Ann. 900. p. 650. et ad Ann. 912. N. 8. p. 685. N. 14. p. 689. Edit. Col.

† Bellarm. Chronol. ad Ann. 1026. p. 93. et de Sacram. I. 1. c. 8. de gemit. Columba, p. 192, 208, 209, 392.

‡ Genebr. Chronol. ad Anno. 901. [Per annos fere 150, pontifices certe 50 a Johanne scilicet, 8vo. qui Nicolao et Adriano sanctis pontificibus successit ad Leonem usque qui primus a Deo vocatus velut alter Aaron antiquam Pontificum integritatem e coelo in sedem apostolicam revocavit, a virtute majorum prorsus defecerunt, apostatici potius quam Apostolici Anno 904. Par. 1585.]

§ S. Bern. Serm. 33. in Cant. fol. exli. J. Paris, N. D. [Væ generationi huic a fermento Pharisaeorum quod est hypocrisy, si tamen hypocrisy dici debet quæ jam latere, præ abundantia non valet et præ impudentia non valet. Serpit hodie putida tabes per omne corpus Ecclesie. Ministri Christi sunt et servient Antichristo. Sermo xxxiii. vol. ii. par. 1. p. 2886. A Paris. 1839.]

for the abundance of it cannot, and for its impudence does not desire to be concealed." In the Ceremonial for the Election of Popes,* there is deep complaint of such corruption, as in the phrase of that book, caused "the pillar of the Church to shake." In our own kingdom, the Norman invasion has been, in great measure, imputed to the decay of learning and piety in that age,† in which, "the priests could scarce stammer out mass: he was esteemed a prodigy in learning who understood grammar; the great ones frequented not the Church; all sorts of people were given to shameful intemperance." In sum, for many years together before the Council of Trent (which acted contrary to the design for which it was, by good men, desired), no voices were more frequent and more loud in the Roman Church, than the cries for Reformation. But,

Secondly, To pass by general complaints, we may furnish ourselves with abundance of instances, in the lives of particular men of that communion, who have been infamous for impiety. And because Bellarmine is pleased to send us to the Fathers and Doctors of his Church for examples of holiness, we will thither go, observing three things by the way: first, that he has put the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles into his catalogue, though they are more ours than his. Secondly, that he has forborne the mention of any one Pope, lest he should have put us upon inquiring after the rest. Thirdly, that he could not be ignorant of the history of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were esteemed great doctors and reverend fathers in the Jewish Church, and sate in the chair of Moses, but said and did not; and dishonoured that true Church, but had upon them no note of real sanctity, by which they might commend it.

My business is not to write a history of the lives of Popes, or of the founders of monastic orders. I shall content myself with a few reflections upon two or three of this sort of men, with whom the more the world is acquainted, the less veneration it will have for them.

I will not be partial, but begin with an eminent man, Pope Gregory the Great, who is said to be the last of the good Popes, and the first of the bad. This man took upon him to give Austin the monk authority over the British bishops, who were

* *Cer. de Elect. Pont.* p. 17.

† *G. Malms. in Wil.* 1. 1. 3. p. 102.

strangers to him, and never under the yoke either of him or his predecessors. He fawned upon the Emperor Mauritius whilst he lived and prospered ; and owned him as his patron and the maker of his fortunes,* even before he had made his own. But, as soon as the Emperor and his family were barbarously murdered by the most bloody vassal and usurper Phocas, Gregory insulted over this dead lion, and flattered this living monster,† and his most immoral wife Leontia.‡ He used such words at his usurped exaltation, as he did at that which he called the conversion of England ;§ singing profanely, “ Glory to God in the highest—Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.” He exercised also his talent of unchristian flattery towards Brunichild, queen of France,|| who was stained in the blood of ten crowned heads, and against whom Lucilius, if alive, could not write a satire.

If now, even in the life of St. Gregory the Great, we want the note of sufficient probity, at what loss must we be in the life of such an one as Pope John XII. who, in a Synod held at Rome,¶ was formally accused before Otto the Great of these horrible crimes, *viz.* “ The ordaining a deacon in a stable ; the committing of adultery and incest ; the putting out the eyes of a holy man ; the drinking a health to the god of this world ; the invoking of Jupiter and Venus when he was at dice, in favour of his cast. The Synod sate, the witnesses were ready, his presence was urged by the Emperor and the Synod. He refused to appear ; and instead of purging himself, he sent this menace to the Synod, that if the Fathers deposed him, he would excommunicate all of them, and make them incapable of ordaining and of celebrating of mass.”

This is testified by Luitprandus, upon whose word Bellar-

* S. Greg. l. 1. Ep. 1. fol. 356. Par. 1523. l. 2. Ep. 61. fol. 373. Ex illo jam tempore dominus meus fuisti, quando adhuc dominus omnium non eras.

† Ep. 43. l. 11. fol. 441. Quantas Omnipotenti Domino laudes debemus, quod remoto jugo Tristicie, ad Libertatis tempora, sub imperiali benignitatis vestrae Pietate pervenimus. &c.

‡ Ep. 44. l. 11. fol. 441. Quae lingua, &c.

§ Ep. 58. l. 9. fol. 431. ad Aug. Episc. Angl. de Convers. Gentis. Gloria in Excelsis, &c. l. 11. p. 441. Ep. 36. Greg. Phocæ Augusto. Gloria in Excelsis Deo, qui juxta quod scriptum est, mutat tempora et transfert Regna, &c. Lætentur Coeli et exultet Terra.

|| L. 5. Ep. 59. f. 392. Greg. Brun. Excellentiae vestrae Christianitas, &c.

¶ Luitprand. Hist. l. 6. c. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. p. 153 to 158.

mine concludes the sanctity of Pope Formosus;* and therefore against him at least, he is author sufficient for the wickedness of Pope John.

This surpriseth not those observing men who look into the inside of the consistory, and see those evil arts by which elections are often made; arts, some of which the *Ceremoniale* itself does not dissemble.†

Touching the sanctity of founders of orders, St. Dominick is one of Bellarmine's great examples. But he must excuse the Reformed world, if it will not take a blot for an admirable figure.

Pope Innocent dreamt that Dominick was chosen as a prop to the Lateran building, which, without the aid his shoulders gave it, would have fallen to the ground. As if his Holiness had not been pillar enough for the supporting of it; for perhaps he was as omnipotent as he was infallible. Yet, after all this, he was a trumpeter in that holy war against the innocent Albigenses, in which both swords were used to the ruin of so many families, and the loss of so many lives in a very barbarous manner. The consciences of those people having moved them to bear testimony against the corruptions of Rome.‡

For some other orders, every eye cannot see that contempt of the world which is so much talked of, and so seldom found. The readiest way, in the ecclesiastical state, to grow considerable in the world, is first to enter into some of the orders. And, for example sake, it was some while ago the boast of some men, that there had been of St. Benedict's order 24 popes, § 183 cardinals, and 1570 abbots.

The austerities and mortifications of such orders are generally mentioned as proofs of their extraordinary holiness. Yet you will find even among the heathens as great rigours as amongst the severest in their cloisters. The Jesuits, in their late voyage to Siam, have furnished us with an instance in the Tapolins of that country, who, in such strictnesses, seem not inferior to St. Bruno himself: "They have an estate of life, not much unlike to his, called *Vipasana*,|| in which they keep

* Bell. Chron. Ann. 891. p. 83.

† Cer. de Elect. Pont. p. 17. Quot denique per Simoniace Hæresis Trapezitas, repetitis malleis, crebrisq;e tunisionibus subjacuit. Vide in p. 37. Bull. Julii 2. contra simoniace electos, et simoniace eligentes.

‡ V. Thuan. Hist. l. 6. ad Ann. 1550. p. 186, 187. AEmil. l. 6. de Reb. Gest. Francor.

§ Valaterani Anthrop. l. 21. p. 753.

|| Voyage de Siam. l. 6. p. 412. on ne peut rien voir de plus austere, &c.

perpetual silence, and give themselves up to the contemplation of holy things. The Jesuits assure us that they reproached the Romans for want of sufficient veneration of sacred images, holy writings, and priests.* They tell us, that for that which concerns their manners and conduct of life, a Christian can teach nothing more perfect than that which their religion prescribes. That it forbids the impiety of every thought. That what are counsels among Christians are with Tapolins indispensable precepts. That they forbid the use of any liquor which may intoxicate. That they drink no wine upon any occasion. That they are extremely scandalized at Christian priests for drinking it. That they are charitable to beasts, and relieve them in their needs.† That they take great pains in preaching, and educating youth in their monasteries, shaving them, putting them on a habit, causing them to fast, forbidding them to sing or play, or hear singers, or see public spectacles, or use perfumes, or love to touch money, or delight in what they eat, but to mix something unpleasant with it.‡ They report further concerning the Tapolins themselves, that they observe many rules of strictness besides those by which their scholars and the laity are obliged. That they frequent their pagods; look not on women, speak not to them; live on alms, but go not into the houses; expose themselves to the open heavens several nights in February, in the midst of the fields; keep a solemn fast of three months, preach every day of that season; recite a kind of chapelet; preach sometimes from morning to night (each in his turn for six hours together) without wearying the hearers.§ They cast a ring into the sea, and it is calm (if we have faith to believe it). They have places to which great numbers of pilgrims travel upon the score of devotion. They have images which they carry abroad for the procuring of good weather. They have, they say, a relic of their god Sommonokhodom, who is ascended, a portion of his hair.|| So that if mere monastic sanctity be a note of a true religious society, you may find out by it such a society at Siam."

Last of all: There are many things in the Roman Church itself, which, by helping forward an ill life, do in part deface this mark of her sanctity. Such as charming consecrations,

* Voyage de Siam. 1. 6. p. 410.

† P. 414, 415, 416.

§ Ib. p. 418, 419, 420, 422.

‡ P. 418.

|| Ib. p. 412, 413, 415, 416.

indulgences, dispensations, and other abuses of the seal of the Church ; doctrines about masses, attrition, purgatory, and Papal supremacy. Which last is very prejudicial to the quiet of the world, especially in the deposing point, concerning which I take leave to use the words of another with relation to Bellarmine : “ He was himself* a preacher for the League in Paris, during the rebellion there of King Henry IV. Some of his principles are these following : In the kingdoms of men, the power of the king is from the people, because the people make the king. Observing that he says [in the kingdoms of men] there is no doubt but he restrains this principle to the subordination of the Pope. For his Holiness in that rebellion, as you have heard, was declared Protector of the League. So that the Pope first excommunicates (which is the outlawry of the Church) ; and, by virtue of this excommunication, the people are left to their own natural liberty, and may, without further process from Rome, depose him. Accordingly you see it practised in the same instance. Pope Sixtus first thunderstruck King Henry III. and the King of Navarre. Then the Sorbon make decrees that they have successively forfeited the crown : the Parliament verifies these decrees, and the Pope is petitioned to confirm the sense of the nation, that is, of the rebels. But I have related this too favourably for Bellarmine. For we hear him in another place positively affirming it as matter of faith, ‘if any Christian prince shall depart from the catholic religion, and shall withdraw others from it ; he immediately forfeits all power and dignity, even before the Pope has pronounced sentence on him : and his subjects, in case they have power to do it, may, and ought to cast out such an heretic from his sovereignty over Christians.’ ”

If therefore the faith of Bellarmine be faction, whatsoever his Church is in itself, it is certain, as he has made it, it can never be found out, either as the Church or as a sound Church, so far as we are to look for it by the note of holiness.

* Postscript to Transl. of Maimb. Hist. of the League, p. 15, 16, 17.

THE
 ELEVENTH NOTE OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED,
 VIZ.
 THE GLORY OF MIRACLES.

Undecima Nota est Gloria Miraculorum.—Bellar. de Notis Ecclesie.
 Lib. iv. cap. xiv.

HAD not the Cardinal either thought by the mere number of his notes to have given the greater show to the argument, or wrote in pure compliance to the humour and interests of the age wherein he lived, he would hardly have insisted upon this of miracles, especially in the method wherein he hath managed it. For by instancing from the very first age of the Church to the fifteenth, nay to the sixteenth (wherein himself undertook the defence of it), he hath interested himself in all the ridiculous stories, the fantastic legends, which the monkish, fabulous ages have delivered, the mere recital of which, since he hath espoused them, might be a sufficient exposure of his argument. And indeed, had the Cardinal's authors but used the same grave care and fidelity which that great historian, though a Gentile, professed in his writing the Peloponnesian War, *he* had lost the greatest part of this note, and *we* been excused the pains of examining it. For that historian tells us, “He could multiply fables as others have done, and they might perhaps be more divertive to an injudicious reader, but his regard should be to what is true and certain, which all that have a mind to the certainty of things should judge much more profitable.”*

However, proceed we to the examination of this note, as the Cardinal hath thought fit to propose it in proof of his Church.

* Thucydid. I. 1. p. 16. A. B. C. Καὶ ἐξ μὲν ἀκρόστιν ἵσως τὸ μῆνι μεθῶδες ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται. “Οσοι δὲ βούλησονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων πότε αὐθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἴστεσθαι, ὡφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει,

As to this he premiseth this two-fold foundation.

(1.) "That miracles are necessary to evince any new faith, or extraordinary mission."

(2.) "That miracles are efficacious and sufficient." By the former, he tells us, may be deduced, "that the Church is not to be found amongst us Protestants :" by the latter, "that it is most assuredly amongst them."

1. As to the necessity of miracles, he quotes Moses, Exod. iv., St. Matthew, chap. x., and St. John, chap. xv. He further proves it, "by a similitude of one necessarily shewing his orders received from his diocesan, by which he is authorised to preach ; and by a quotation from St. Austin, and the concession of Melanthon one of the Reformed persuasion ; all which was needless, and the similitude too weak and inconclusive."

2. As to the efficacy and sufficiency of miracles, he proves this, "partly as they are the seals and testimonials God useth, without whose immediate power they could not be performed, and who will by no means bear witness to a lie. And therefore where either Turks, or Pagans, Jews, heretics, or false prophets, have pretended to any extraordinary feats or accomplishments of this kind, either they have appeared the mere tricks and delusions of the devil ; or else, in the attempts they have made, they have been publicly disgraced and disappointed : so the prophets of Baal, Simon Magus, several of the Donatists, Luther, and Calvin. In the application of the whole, for the proof of his Church, and the utter extirpation of ours from all title to the denomination and benefits of a Church, he gives a summary of miracles in every distinct age, by which the Church of Rome, and no other (for that is the whole drift of his argument), hath been all along signallised as the true catholic Church. In the first age, he mentions the miracles of the Holy Jesus, and his Apostles. In the second, those of the Christian soldiers under Antoninus the emperor. In the third, those of Gregory Thamaturgus. In the fourth, those of Anthony, Hilarion, and others. In the fifth, several mentioned by St. Austin as done in his time. In the sixth, some wonders done by Popes, *viz.* John and Agapetus. In the seventh, miracles wrought in England by Austin the monk and his company. In the eighth, St. Cuthbert and St. John in England. In the ninth, those of Tharasius, and great numbers by Sebastian the martyr. In the tenth, St. Rumbold, St. Dunstan, and a certain King of

Poland, with others. In the eleventh, St. Edward, St. Anselm, and (to make up the number) honest Hildebrand, or Pope Gregory VII. In the twelfth, St. Malachy and St. Barnard. In the thirteenth, St. Francis and Bonaventure, St. Dominick, and others. In the fourteenth, St. Bernardinus and Catharine of Sienna. In the fifteenth, Vincentius, St. Anthonine, and others. And lastly, in the Cardinal's own age, Franciscus de Paula, and the holy Xaviere among the Indians."

Thus having laid down the main scheme of the Cardinal's managing this note, which he calls the glory of miracles, I shall shew the weakness of that proof, as it concerns the Church of Rome distinct, and exclusively to that of the Reformed. And that under these three heads :

I. *That mere Miracles, without any other considerations at all, are not a sufficient note of any Church or religion whatever.*

II. *Much less are those Miracles which are alleged in the Church of Rome, any tolerable proof or confirmation of these particular doctrines or practices, wherein we of the Reformed Church do differ from them.*

III. *And lastly, We of the Reformed Church, as we do not pretend to the working of miracles in our age, so, if we did, we could pretend to prove nothing by them, but what hath been already sufficiently proved by the miracles of Christ and his Apostles.*

I. *That mere Miracles, without any other considerations at all, are not a sufficient note of any Church or religion whatever.* I add this passage [“without any other considerations at all”] because those miracles which are recorded and embraced by all the faithful, as part of the undeniable proof of Christianity, are attended with all the circumstances that are requisite to strengthen and enforce them : whereas, those miracles which the Church of Rome pretends to, in confirmation of some doctrines, which we differ from them in, they are attended with none of the requisite considerations to enforce them, *i. e.* they are produced merely to confirm some particular doctrines, which doctrines have no antecedent advantage of being plainly and expressly laid down in the Holy Scriptures, nor the miracles themselves of being foretold by any prophecy.

As for those miracles that in primitive days were wrought to confirm Christianity in general: it was the infinite goodness of Providence to make them of that nature, and to order the performance of them in that way, that there is no room left for the honest considering mind to reject them: either as to matter of fact to mistrust that they were never done; or as to their force and efficacy, to suspect that they do not most fully confirm what they were produced for.

1. As to matter of fact: they were done so publicly, and in the view of those that were the greatest enemies; and after they were done, they were reported partly so soon, in an age when there were so many then alive that could have contradicted the report if not well grounded; and partly with so much hazard, that as the very reporting them exposed them to the rage of the enemy to the uttermost: so the falsehood of them, if it had appeared, had brought upon them the scorn of those that had been kindest inclined. Whereas, the miracles that are more peculiarly appropriated to the Church of Rome, they are never pretended to be done but amongst those of their own communion, never for the conviction of any one gainsayer, no one of the Reformed religion having ever once been an eye-witness to any of them.* They come handed to us from a dark and fabulous age, reported of persons, who themselves hint no such thing of themselves in any of their own writings, but rather to the contrary, as may be seen more afterward: and the stories they have framed, gave them no hazard (excepting loss of reputation with all wise men), for it was in a time when the monks' plenty, and ease, and freedom from all dangers, gave them a luxuriancy of thought and fancy, and the invention itself a title to the favour of great men, and perhaps to the same kind of honour to be done for them after death. So St. Bernard had the fame of miracles affixed to him by those that came after him; as he had done to St. Malachy in the same age with himself. So also St. Anthonine tells his stories of St. Vincentius, and Surius his of him. But then,

2. Besides matter of fact, wherein as to the certainty of the thing, and the reasons of credibility, there is so great a difference; so also is there, in the force and efficacy of the one and of the other, to confirm what they are produced for. There is a most unquestionable force in the argument taken

* Vid. Pref. to the School of the Eucharist.

from those miracles that were for the first proof of Christianity, but not so in the other, as we shall see anon. There are these circumstances that highly recommend the primitive miracles.

1. That those that were wrought were generally very beneficial to human nature, doing mighty offices of kindness towards those whom they were wrought upon; such as healing the sick, raising the dead, restoring the deaf, the lame, and the blind, &c. All which bore an excellent proportion to the great design of redeeming and saving mankind. And if at any time there were any mixture of severity in the very act, such as striking some dead by a word's speaking, or putting others into the immediate possession of the devil by the act of excommunication; yet was even this done, either in kindness to posterity, by fixing, in the first institution of things, one or two standing "pillars of salt," that might be for example and admonition to after-ages, against some practices that might otherwise in time destroy Christianity: as in the first instance of Annanias and Sapphira against the sin of hypocrisy: or else, to some good purposes for the persons themselves, as in the last instance of excommunication: so the incestuous person was adjudged by St. Paul, "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Cor. v. 5. None of these miracles were such useless ludicrous actions, as the Romish authors have filled their histories with. Such as that of St. Berinus, who "being in full sail for France, and half his voyage over, finding he had forgot something, walks out upon the sea, and returns back dry-shod." Such again as St. Francis, bespeaking the ass in the kind compellation of "Brother, to stand quiet till he had done preaching, and not disturb the solemnity." Such as St. Mochua, by his prayer and staff, hindering the poor lambs from sucking their dams, when they were running toward them with full appetite. And St. Fintanus keeping off the calf from the cow, that they could neither of them move toward one another. Such, in a word, as St. Finnianus and St. Ruadanus sporting their miracles with each other, as if they had the power given them for no other end but mere trial of skill, or some pretty diversion to by-standers.*

2. As those primitive miracles were generally very bene-

* Vid. Colgan. in Vit. Mochuae et Finniani.

ficial to human nature, so the design of them was of the greatest importance and significance imaginable; and both this design and the miracles that should confirm it, plainly laid down beforehand in the prophecies of the Old Testament. The design was, to bring in and establish entirely an excellent religion, a perfectly new dispensation of things; nay, further to abolish a former model and constitution of things, that had been formerly brought in and established by the very same argument of miracles. It was not to establish any one particular doctrine, that might be either in supplement to, or direct contradiction of, what had been hitherto delivered: but to settle one perfect and entire standard, that should be the rule and measure of all that we were to believe and practise to the world's end.

It is true, the Jewish dispensation, as it was fixed and modelled wholly at the appointment of God by the hands of his mediator Moses; so it was also enforced by such visible powers from above, that abundantly authorised the institution, and gave it that confirmation (so long as it was framed and designed to continue) that there should be no kind of miracle pretended, but should then have its trial by this standard; and if anything should be wrought with design to draw any off from their present establishment, the sign or wonder should for that reason be rejected, and the pretender to it, though he had made himself signal in performing it, immediately condemned, Deuteronomy xiii. But then, as things were then settled for a continuance of time only, and the change of the whole scene was determined on the appearing of the promised Messiah; so the change, and the person that should effect it, with all the mighty works he should perform, and the vast success of these miracles accordingly, were all pointed out beforehand by express prophecies, uttered under this very Mosaic dispensation: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken," Deut. xviii. 15. To this prophecy St. Stephen appeals in the defence he makes for himself, Acts vii. 37. And this is the whole indication our Saviour thinks fit to give John the Baptist, that himself was the person that should come, Matth. xi. 5. *viz.* "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them," as had been prophesied before.

Now if the Cardinal could have shewn, either that a new dispensation of things was to be introduced, after what had been established by Christ and his Apostles, or that what was to be introduced, should be also afresh confirmed by some new endowments of power from above, and that accordingly the Church of Rome upon just warrant had introduced, and by her miracles had authorized this great revolution ; here indeed had been a reasonable proposal to our faith. But, as there is no hint of this in the holy Scriptures, nor no prediction of miracles to confirm it ; so if any such things be now pretended in any thing of this kind, they are no warrant to us to embrace it. There is, I confess, a considerable change foretold, and there is also a prophecy as to those wonders that should be wrought for the justifying of this change ; but then, this change hath no other denomination than that of apostasy or falling away, and the wonders by which it must be justified, are to be no other than “lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish,” 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. And as to this change and these wonders, if those of the Roman communion think fit to challenge them to themselves, we shall not contend with them in that affair. Here therefore is the just foundation upon which those divine miracles, that were wrought for confirmation of Christianity, do rest, *viz.* That the design of them was to bring in entirely a new dispensation of things, and that this new dispensation of things had been predetermined by God, and the miracles that were to confirm it, when brought in, had their testimonials beforehand by prophecy. And this testimony St. Peter builds upon, as having something in it of greater certainty than the miracles themselves, 2 Pet. i. 16—19. The miracles he mentions, when he tells them, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty : for he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, &c. And this voice we heard when we were with him in the holy mount.” But then the Apostle adds, “We have a **MORE SURE** word of prophecy,” &c.

And this is that I have propounded to shew, namely, that mere miracles, without any other considerations at all, are not a sufficient note or proof of any Church or religion whatever. The word [miracles] I take in the comprehensive sense, to

mean all those signs or wonders, any prodigious effects that appear to us out of the course, and order, and power of nature, which no one can ordinarily do himself, nor assign any reason in nature for the doing of them ; such things may certainly be done, and yet may be no proof of the truth and divinity of that doctrine they would advance. It is not questionable, but there may be some miracles wrought, wherein the finger of God is so plainly discernible, that it would render those that that reject them inexcusable. Such as once extorted that confession from the magicians in Egypt, Exod. viii. 19, and such as our Saviour did so avow, Luke xi. 20, that from thence he charges the Jews with the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, as may be observed by comparing Luke xi. from ver. 15 to 20. with Matth. xii. from ver. 24 to 32. But then there have been considerable signs shewn, and wonders done, of which no reasons in nature can be given, and yet make no proof of their own divinity, and consequently not of that they were advanced for. Such were those which Jannes and Jambres, when they withheld Moses, performed in Pharaoh's view : these, those of the Church of Rome with one consent do acknowledge to have been the mere delusions of the devil. Otherwise, if the mere doing such great things should be a just proof of their being sent from God, what shall we think of the feats of Apollonius Tyaneus, as they are reported by Philostratus, if but the most, or some part of what he, in a just history of eight books, tells us, were true : as "that he made a tree speak to him ;" that he "put to flight an hobgoblin, which in the shape of a beautiful virgin made love to him ;" that he foretold many things, and particularly, that "while he himself was in Ephesus, he declared the death of the Emperor Domitian, at that instant when they were actually committing it at Rome :" with abundance more of that nature, which it were too tedious to recite. Indeed, it is not improbable, but that Philostratus was a right sophister in the modern sense ; and as very a wag at invention for his Apollonius, as any monk in Christendom hath been for any of his saints ; Photius his censure of him is, that the whole story is fabulous ; and having instanced in that passage of Apollonius filling some vessels with water, and others with wind, by which he could by turns water the earth after a long drought, and blow the showers off, and dry the earth again, he concludes, "Such like things as these, full of delirancy, and many other things hath he prodigiously feigned of him, that the whole study of a vain labour throughout all

his eight books is lost, and to no purpose.”* The same kind of esteem for this author does Eusebius profess in his answer to Hierocles, who in his two books, which he intituled *Δόγματα Φιλαλήθεις*, had set up Apollonius in competition with the Holy Jesus. He questions the veracity of Philostratus in many things, though he was willing to allow Apollonius the reputation of a person of considerable wisdom.† However, let the truth of the matter be what it will, it is reasonable enough to set these wonders of Apollonius at least against those miracles which the Church of Rome boasts of, distinct from those which confirmed our common religion, because the authorities seem equal, and the motives of credibility much of the same kind.

Again: what should we think of those prodigies at Delphos, as they are reported by Pausanias in Phocie. That when Brennus and the Gauls came against it, and the people miserably affrighted, had recourse to the oracle; the god there “bade them not fear, he assured them he would defend his own.” Accordingly there brake out “earthquakes, and thunders, and lightnings, and apparitions of several of their heroes formerly dead, all the day long. And in the night, unwonted and insufferable rigours of cold, mighty stones, and tops of the rock torn from Parnassus, and thrown so furiously amongst the barbarians, that not only one or two, but some hundreds of men, either as they stood upon the guard, or were sleeping together, were slain by them: and by these means was the whole army defeated, dissipated and destroyed.”

And thus, indeed, the Fathers all along do not suppose but that very great things may be done by heathens, or heretics, which yet can be no proof that either of them are in the right. Origen, in his first book against Celsus, takes notice of the objection Celsus makes about the conjurors in Egypt, ‘That they could put dæmons to flight, could blow off diseases with their breath, could call up the spirits of heroes, could dress up the appearance of tables furnished with all manner of delicacies,’ &c. Which things, as to matter of fact, he does not seem to

* Παραπλήσια τούτοις ἀνίας μεστά καὶ ἔτερα πλεῖστα τερατεύσαμενος, ἐν δέτω δὲ λόγοις ἡ πᾶσα αὐτῷ τῆς ματαιοπονίας σπουδὴ κατηράλωται. Phot. Cens. in mir. Philostr. Paris edit.

† Εγὼ δὲ σοφόν τινα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα τὸν Τυανέα γεγονέναι ἡγούμην, καὶ ἐτι γε αὐτῆς ἔχεσθαι διανοίας ἐκών είναι βονλούμην, &c. Euseb. contra Hierocl. versus initium. [p. 514. Colon. 1688.]

deny the truth of, but to invalidate the force of them from a consideration of the persons that wrought them, as being men of no good lives. And again, in his second book against Celsus, he instances in this comparison of miracles, and gives this note to discern those that are divine, from the juggle of impostors, or cheats of the devil, *viz.* ‘To observe the lives and manners of those that perform them, and also the effects when performed; that is, whether they bring hurt and damage to persons, or whether they correct their manners,’ &c.

St. Cyprian,* discoursing of some that had broken off from the Church, and yet, supposing it possible for them to signalize themselves by miracles, quoting that passage of St. John, Ep. i. ch. 2, “They went out from us, but they were not of us,” tells us, “That though the doing such miracles is an high and admirable thing, yet if they take not heed to go in the just and right way, it gives them no title to the kingdom of heaven:” where it is observable, that the *recti et justi itineris observatio*, is not to be understood merely of a good and virtuous life; for that is acknowledged on all hands, that some persons inwardly wicked, but outwardly holding communion with the true Church, might work miracles, as probably Judas did amongst the other disciples. But St. Cyprian means it of those that had turned out of the right way, and through schism had broken off from the true Church, as the tenor of that discourse carries it.

Irenaeus† tells us of the prodigious errors of Marcus the heretic, and yet two of the wonders he did, *viz.* “When he was consecrating, or giving of thanks over the cup mixed with wine, drawing out his invocations to a mighty length, he made the cup appear of a purple, or red colour; and that it should seem that that grace that comes from the place which is above all things, did by the power of his invocation distil its own

* *Nam et prophetare, et Daemonia excludere, et virtutes magnas in terris facere, sublimis utique et admirabilis res est, non tamē regnum coeleste consequitur, quisquis in his omnibus invenitur, nisi recti et justi itineris observatione gradatur.* Cypr. de Unitat. Eccles. [p. 114. Ox. 1682.]

† Ποτήρια οὖν κεκραμένα προσποιούμενος εὐχαριστεῖν, καὶ ἵπι πλέον ἐκτείνων τὸν λόγον τῆς ἐπικλήσεως πορφύρα καὶ ἐρυθρὰ ἀναφαίνεσθαι ποεῖ, ὡς δοκεῖν τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑπέρ τὰ ὄλα χάριν, τὸ αἷμα τὸ ἑαυτῆς στάζειν ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ διὰ τῆς ἐπικλήσεως αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὑπερμείρεσθαι τὸν παρόντας ἐξ εκείνου γεύσασθαι τοῦ πόματος, ἵνα καὶ εἰς αὐτοὺς ἐπομβρήσῃ ἡ διὰ τοῦ Μάγου τούτου κλητιζομένη χάρις. Iren. advers. Hæres. l. 1. c. 9. [c. 13. vol. 1. p. 60. Venet. 1734.]

blood into the cup, that those that were present should vehemently desire to taste of the same draught ; that so that very grace boasted of by the magician, might actually flow into them too." He further instances in a magic trick he had of filling a greater cup with a much less, and to the view of others, inspiring some of the seduced women with the gift of prophesying, and the like. This passage of Irenæus is quoted verbatim by Epiphanius, who also calls this Marcus, Τῆς Μαγικῆς κυβελας ἐμπειρότατον, "one perfectly skilled in the magic art."*

St. Austin† directs thus : " Let no man," saith he, " vend fables amongst you. Both Pontius wrought a miracle, and Donatus prayed, and God answered him from heaven. First, either they are deceived themselves, or else they deceive others. However, suppose he could remove mountains, yet, saith the Apostle, ' If I have not charity, I am nothing.' Let us see whether he hath not charity : I should have believed it, if he had not divided the unity [of the Church], for God hath warned me against such wonder-mongers,‡ if I may so call them : ' In the latter days there shall arise false prophets, doing signs and wonders,' &c. Mark xiii. *Ergo cautos nos fecit sponsus, quia et miraculis decipi non debemus.* Therefore hath our Lord warned us, because we should not be deceived by miracles. And so he goes on with that which we find in Decret. par. 2. Caus. 1. Quæst. 1. cap. 56. *Teneamus ergo unitatem, fratres mei: præter unitatem, et qui facit miracula, nihil est.* Let us hold fast the unity, out of this unity even he that works miracles is nothing. Peter the Apostle, saith he, raised the dead. Simon Magus did many things ; there were many Christians that could do none of these things, neither what Peter nor what Simon did : but what did they rejoice in ? that their names were written in heaven."

This Father hath many other passages of this kind, in his book *de Unitate Ecclesiæ*, but they are already so largely quoted in that excellent preface before the School of the Eucharist, lately made English, that I refer the reader thither, not only for that, but also for the whole argument about miracles, which might justly have superseded this discourse upon

* Epiphanius. in Hæres. 34. Marcosii.

† August. Exposit. in Evang. Johan. Tractat. 13. versus finem. [vol. 3. par. 2. p. 398. Par. 1680.]

‡ Istos mirabiliarios.

the Note of Miracles, had it been so ordered in its due place: so that miracles merely, we see in the judgment of the Fathers, were never accounted a full and adequate note of any true Church. Which, in truth, the Cardinal himself, after the great foundation he seemed to have laid as to the sufficiency of miracles, does in some measure yield, when he tells us in this very same chapter, "that the Church is demonstrated by miracles, not as to the evidence and certainty of the thing, but only as to the evidence and certainty of credibility."* Which is as much as to say, that miracles may be a note of the Church, and they may not be so, that is, such a kind of note by which we may give a good guess at the true Church, but cannot be certain. For as one of their own writers expresteth it, "*Miracula Deo et Diabolo, Christo et Antichristo sunt communia* :† miracles are common to God and the devil, to Christ and Antichrist."

II. If miracles in general are no sufficient note or proof of any Church whatever, much less are those miracles alleged in the Church of Rome in confirmation of those particular doctrines and practices wherein we of the Reformed Church differ from them, much less, I say, are they any just note of their Church, or evidence of the truth of those doctrines. There are a variety of miracles offered to us in their histories, or in their legends, in confirmation of the several doctrines of Sacramental Confession, Adoration of Images and Reliques, Invocation of Saints, Purgatory, the bodily presence in the Eucharist, and the holiness of particular persons that have flourished in their Church. Now as to this, we are to consider these things :

First, That we do not observe any ground throughout the whole Scriptures, either of the Old or New Testament, to expect any miracle for the confirmation of any particular doctrine whatever.

Secondly, That many of those doctrines which these miracles are alleged in confirmation of, are so far from being expressly asserted or warranted in the Holy Scriptures, that they rather bear a direct contrariety.

Thirdly, That there is no tolerable ground for certainty, as

* *Ex miraculis demonstratur Ecclesia, non quoad evidentiam vel certitudinem rei, sed quoad evidentiam et certitudinem credibilitatis.* Bellar. I. iv. c. 14. [vol. 2. p. 128. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

† Espenæus in 2. ad Tim.

to the truth of most of those miracles, which the Romanists do make the glory of their Church.

First, That we do not observe any ground throughout the whole Scriptures, either of the Old or New Testament, to expect any miracle for the confirmation of any particular doctrine whatever. The miracles under the Mosaic dispensation, were to confirm and establish that : and the miracles performed by Christ and his Apostles (as I have already intimated) were to bring in and establish the new “law of faith.” We read nothing throughout the whole Jewish state, that may make us suppose that any of the prophets after the death of Moses (though they were sometimes endued with the power of doing this or that miracle), that they ever taught any new doctrine which had not been delivered by Moses, or which they undertook to confirm by any miracle. It is true, they sometimes wrought a miracle, as a credential for themselves, and their own character, to shew that they were prophets sent from God. But then, the whole errand of their commission was to explain Moses’s law ; to awaken men to a stricter conformity to what they had so provokingly violated ; to denounce heavy judgments upon their disobedience ; to speak encouraging things to a distressed and persecuted Church ; and, in a word, to foretell the events of future ages, and particularly point out the days of the Messiah, and revolutions of Christianity. Again, we find that under the dispensation of the Gospel, the miracles which our Saviour and his Apostles wrought, were to warrant the whole new economy. And though one main thing the Apostles were empowered for, was to bear testimony to the resurrection of their Master, yet was this chiefly, as the whole frame of the Gospel depended wholly upon the truth and evidence of this great event ; because if it were not as fully made out that he rose again, as that he died, their preaching had been vain, and their attempts to abolish the law and constitution of Moses, had been an unwarrantable usurpation.

Nor do we find, that though in a following age or two the Church was probably blessed with those miraculous powers, till the Gospel was diffusively enough propagated ; yet do we not find that they wrought any one miracle for the establishment of any one particular doctrine, much less any doctrine that had not been delivered by the Apostles before them, nor entered into the substance and fundamentals of the Gospel. Which leads us to the next thing, *viz.*

Secondly, That many of those doctrines, which these miracles are alleged in confirmation of, are so far from being expressly asserted or warranted in the Holy Scriptures, that they rather bear a direct contrariety. *E. g.* The doctrine of Transubstantiation, upon which is superstructed the Adoration of the Host; which adoration (supposing the doctrine of transubstantiation not to be fundamentally true) is, by the confession of several of their own authors, downright idolatry. Again, the doctrine of worshipping images, we cannot but think to be against the express law of God. The doctrine of praying to saints departed, seems immediately to intrench upon the office of the Holy Jesus, as he is our alone Mediator, and gives to the creature incommunicable attributes of the Creator, as omniscience and omnipresence. And, to name no more, the doctrine of Purgatory, with its appendant doctrines about Indulgences, Satisfaction, and the like, they seem to alter the whole scheme of the Gospel institution, by taking off from the infiniteness of divine mercy, and sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction.

Now these are the doctrines wherein the glory of the Roman miracles hath been generally concerned. So long therefore as we think we have so much in the Holy Scriptures in bar against the doctrines themselves, we cannot but think we have most just prejudices against the miracles, by which the truth of these doctrines are advanced or supported: we are directed by the Apostle, "to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good," 1 Thess. v. 21; and "not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God," 1 John iv. 1. By the spirits, doubtless must be meant no other than those that pretended to prophesying, to revelations, and to the power of some miracles. Now it is very true, in that first age wherein this Apostle wrote, among the diversity of gifts, there was this of "discerning of spirits," that adorned some men, 1 Cor. xii. 10. It is not probable that the Apostle cautioned these against false spirits, for they were empowered to discern them: but the warning belongs to the whole rank of Christians, as appears by the plain rule he gives to try them by; 1 John iv. 2. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God," &c. This seems to point at a sort of Gnostics in that age, that would be allegorizing the whole history of our Saviour's life and death and resurrection, and make it no real thing, but purely mystical and figurative. Whoever therefore would pre-

tend to the gift of prophecy or miracles, and yet deliver this kind of divinity, he must be rejected, notwithstanding all the show he might make. So in proportion still are we warranted to "try the spirits," to judge of any powers of miracle that are produced in confirmation of a doctrine that may intrench upon the great offices of the blessed Jesus, or look new and foreign to those revelations which himself and his Apostles have delivered to us as the sum and upshot of Christianity. "Though we," saith the Apostle, "or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. i. 8. "Though we," the Apostles that are vested with so visible a power of miracles, nay, "though an angel from heaven" (and certainly if an angel should come, he might be capable of doing things beyond the order or course of nature, as to us at least, as hath been often seen by what devils have performed), though such an one should be propagating other doctrines, and that, by all the most powerful methods that such spiritual beings are capable of using, they are to be held "accursed."

Our Saviour gives the caution to all his followers in every age, "That there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before," Matth. xxiv. 24, 25. I shall only add the great criterion of miracles in the Old Testament, Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul." So long therefore as the doctrines which these sort of miracles are brought to confirm, are in dispute betwixt us, and after all the impartial inquiry we can make, we think that several of them do war directly against the received doctrines of our faith, this "glory of miracles" is vainly urged to us as a note of the true Church, when we are warned even against miracles themselves, where they are pleaded to establish them. All this upon supposal that all these pretended miracles were actually true. But then,

Thirdly, There is no tolerable ground of certainty, as to

matter of fact, of most of those miracles, which the Romanists do make the glory of their Church. The first instance of any miracle wrought by the relics of a martyr, is that story of the bones of Babylas: that martyr having been interred in Daphne, a suburb of Antioch, when Julian the Apostate came to consult Apollo's oracle in that place, near an hundred years after this martyr's interment, he could procure no answer. Upon this, the oracle was conjured at least to give a reason of this silence; accordingly it answered, "Because the bones of Babylas lay so near his temple." I do not find this story called much into question by the gravest authors, nor indeed can we much wonder, that the devil should for once give so open a deference to the remains of an holy man, when by one such an act he hath so effectually improved his interests and kingdom to so great an advance of superstition afterward, in all those fond devotions that have been since paid to the reliques of pretended saints, and all those lewd fables of innumerable miracles acted at their shrines, which probably have been coined upon this first occasion of Babylas.

There is another story almost of as ancient a date: and that is of St. Ambrose having by vision revealed to him where the bones of Gervasius and Protasius the martyrs lay, which he took up, and after considerable miracles wrought, such as curing a blind butcher, &c. he reposèd the venerable reliques under the altar of a new church, which he had then built and dedicated. I am not willing to bring a question upon this neither, as to the truth of it, because I find it not rejected by the best writers, as well as told by St. Ambrose himself, and the reason of some miracles of that time might be in vindication of the catholic faith, against the pestilence of Arianism that raged so fiercely at that time. Yet there are some circumstances that render it something suspicious; as, why that holy man should think of not building or dedicating a new church, unless he could be furnished with some reliques? There seems a pretty good tang of superstition in the very thought; and then, the bulk of those bodies when they were found: they seem of a gigantic race, few of which, I presume, were ever of a constitution for martyrdom. "*Invenimus mire magnitudinis viros duos, ut prisca aetas ferebat* :* we found two men of wonderful bulk, such as olden times were wont to produce." Certainly the age of Decius, wherein they suffered,

* Ambr. Epist. ad Marcel. Soror. 1. 7. [Ep. xxii. vol. 2. p. 875. Paris, 1690.]

did not produce men of a much larger size, than the age of Gratian and Valentinian. But still let this story, as to matter of fact, be received as true: doubtless it hath been followed in later ages with thousands of the like kind, that have been so prodigiously ridiculous and improbable, that several of the considering writers in the Church of Rome have been ashamed of them, have professed their disdain at them, and left their censure upon them as plainly false and impossible. Petrus Abbas Cluniacensis had the wit and honesty, even in the twelfth age, to complain of these tales: “*Nosti quantum me pigeant falsa in Ecclesia Dei cantica, &c. :** you know how irksome these false hymns in the Church of God must needs be to me.” And a little after, in the same epistle, adds, “*Mendacia ad minus 24, canticum id citato percurrens animo, reperi*: he found at least four-and-twenty lies in one hymn of Benedict.” Lindanus, one of their own writers, cites a bishop of Lyons, saying, that he had corrected the Antiphonary, “*Amputatis quæ superflua, levia, falsa, blasphemæ, phantastica, multa videbantur*; having cut off many things which seemed superfluous, trivial, false, blasphemous, and fantastical;” and then adds this of his own; that if that bishop had lived to see the Missals in his days, “*Deum immortalem! quo ea nomine pingeret!* Good God! by what name would he have described them?” Ludovicus Vives,† another of their own authors, speaks of their Golden Legend, “*Quam indigna divis et hominibus sanctorum historia, &c. :‡* how unworthy either of saints or men is that history, which I know not why they should call the Golden Legend, when it was writ by a man of an iron forehead and a leaden understanding.” We are told also by Melchior Canus,§ “That he cannot deny, but that even their best writers, especially in describing the miracles of the saints, have gathered up scattered rumours, and transferred them to posterity in their writings, herein too much indulging themselves, or the ordinary sort of believers, whom they supposed not only ready to believe, but also vehemently desirous of such miracles.” And of the Legends, he declares, “he could not to this day meet with one story that he could allow.” This was the opinion and esteem the wiser authors in the

* Petrus Abbas Cluniacens. l. 5. Epist. 89.

† Lindan. de interpretandis Scripturis, l. 3. c. 3.

‡ Lud. Viv. in fine lib. 2. de Corrupt. Art.

§ Quanquam negare non possumus viros aliquando gravissimos, &c.
Melch. Can. Loc. Theol. l. 11. c. 9.

Church of Rome have left behind them of such stories as these; however, Father Cressy, in his Church History, in this very age of ours, and in a nation where there seems no inclination to such unreasonable credulity, hath thought fit to lick up the spittle of the idlest monks, and to avow the absurdest of all their fictions.

The Centuriators have taken pains for several centuries, both to reckon up the doctrines which the Church of Rome hath brought in, and also in every age to affix the particular miracles that are pretended to justify those doctrines. It might create an infinite nausea in the reader, should I follow that method, or indeed examine those persons and their miracles, whom the Cardinal hath ranged in order from the seventh to the sixteenth age.

However, 1. As to the persons whom he makes so famous for miracles, I shall examine one or two, to give you a taste of the uncertainty of all the rest.

And 2. As to the doctrines: because the Cardinal hath instanced in some, particularly in confirmation of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist, I shall examine one or two of them too.

1. As to the persons. In the twelfth age,* the Cardinal brings in St. Bernard, who, as he tells us, "was the Father of the monks, and most devoutly addicted to the see of Rome; that he was famous for more miracles than any of the saints whose lives are at present extant." Whereas if we consult St. Bernard himself, he is comforting himself and others, under the defect of miracles in his age. He tells us, "That miracles are not so properly meritorious, as the indications of good men. Who," saith he, "now casteth out devils, speaketh with tongues, destroys serpents," &c. † Nay, seems to account the great work wrought upon the hearts of believers, wherein he and others were made the blessed instruments, to be equivalent to miracles. "The first work," saith he, "of that faith which

* Bellarm. de Not. Eccles. l. iv. c. 14. [vol. 2. p. 126. col. 2. Prag. 1721.] Romanis Pontificibus addictissimus, pluribus Miraculis claruit, quam ullus Sanctorum, quorum vitae scriptæ extant.

† Bernard. Serm. 1. [vol. 1. par. 2. p. 1985. Par. 1839.] In die Ascensionis. Non tam merita sunt, quam indicia meritorum.—Quis Dæmonia ejicit, linguis novis loquitur, serpentes tollit, &c. Primum enim opus fidei per dilectionem operantis cordis compunctio est, in qua sine dubio ejiciuntur daemona, cum eradicantur e corde peccata, &c. Bern. ubi supra. [p. 1986.]

worketh by love, is the compunction of the heart, by which, without doubt, devils are cast out, when sin is rooted out of the heart. And then, those that believe in Christ, speak with tongues too, when the old things are vanished from their lips, they do not speak for the future with the old tongue of their first parents, who declined into words of wickedness. So when, by compunction of heart and confession of the mouth, former sins are blotted out, they must necessarily destroy serpents, that is, extinguish the venomous suggestions, &c." And thus he goes on in that allusive way, accommodating the whole Christian life to something of those miraculous acts in the primitive days. But let the ingenuous reader judge now; is it not probable, that had St. Bernard been so very illustrious for miracles, "beyond all the saints, whose lives had been ever written," instead of apologizing for the defect of miracles, or drawing the equivalent between the conversion of a sinner, and casting out devils, or speaking with tongues, he would not have put in a word or two here, of what great things God had enabled him to do?

Again; it is observable of St. John Damascen, concerning whom they tell us, that his hand having been cut off by the Saracens, for the profession of the faith; he praying before the image of the blessed Virgin, and falling asleep, upon his awaking found his hand restored, only a seam of blood visible where it was cut off and joined again. Now, if we consult himself, he tells us of the doctors and pastors of the Church, that succeeded the Apostles in their grace and dignity, that they having obtained the enlightened grace of God's Spirit, did both by the power of miracles, and eloquence of speech, enlighten blind men, and reduce the wanderer into the way, *ημεῖς δὲ μηδὲ τῶν θαυμάτων*,* &c. "But we," saith he, "who have neither the gift of miracles, nor of speech," &c. Is this spoken like a man of miracle?† His commentator indeed would bring him off, as if it were his modesty to speak thus of himself, and gives the instance of St Paul, confessing himself least of all the Apostles: but certainly were he never so modest, he would not lie for the matter by any means, especially when he made mention of the miracles that former ages had produced. St. Paul, as humbly as he thought and spoke of himself, made no scruple, upon occasion, to mention the mighty powers

* Damascen. Orthodox. Fid. l. 1. c. 3.

† Cum modestia et viro Christiano digna humilitate de seipso loquitur B. Pater Damascenus, &c.

that God had endued him with ; and so did St. Peter too : nor was it other than their duty sometimes to do it, both to own the gift with thankfulness, and to make use of it as an argument to enforce their doctrines upon those they had to deal with. Thus much for the persons.

2. For the doctrines. It would be too tedious to run through the various heads of doctrine, which they boast of as confirmed by miracles, many of which are so monstrously ridiculous, so highly improbable, so confessedly fabulous, so perfectly needless and to no purpose, that they are not worth one minute's regard either to examine or expose them. The Legends of the Saints, and the School of the Eucharist, lately published in English ; I may add, Father Cressy's Church History, will abundantly furnish the reader that is at leisure to dip into this way of learning. However, because our Cardinal hath thought fit to make this of miracles his last argument for the proof of Christ's bodily presence in the holy sacrament ; and besides pointing at great numbers, hath himself insisted upon six or seven which he thought of the greatest weight :* I shall examine one or two of them.

It is a very considerable miracle the Cardinal mentions from Paulus Diaconus in the Life of St. Gregory, which I rather pick out, because I find our Putney convert very fond of it. It is of a woman that laughed while, in the distribution of the sacramental bread; she heard it called the body of our Lord,† " when she knew she had made it with her own hands. Upon this St. Gregory prayed, and the outward species of bread was turned into visible flesh, by which the woman was recovered to the true faith, and the whole assembly mightily confirmed."

This were a good significant proof of transubstantiation indeed, if it were but true. Though here also a man might as justly question his senses at the sight of such a change, as he must always renounce them in the belief of the thing itself. But there are considerable difficulties, before the truth of the story will go down with us unbelievers.

For, 1. It is a very unlucky thing, that never any such miracle was yet wrought in view of any of those Churches, that do professedly deny this doctrine. In the second Council of Nice, Actio 7, Therasius the president puts this grave ques-

* V. Bellarm. de Sacr. Euchar. l. 3. c. 8. [vol. 3. p. 701. Ingoist. 1601.]

† Consensus Veterum, p. 69.

tion, "What is the cause that miracles are not wrought by any of our images?" and as gravely answers it himself, "Because miracles are not given to them that believe, but to them that believe not." It is indeed what St. Paul* intimates concerning the gift of tongues, which most interpreters apply to all other miracles. We are the persons to whom this ocular demonstration should be made; and because it hath not yet, upon any occasion or challenge whatever, been made amongst us, we may reasonably question the truth of this, or any other story of this kind, which they tell amongst themselves.

Besides, 2. This story was writ by Paulus Diaconus about two hundred years after the death of this Gregory, and in an age as fabulous as any hath yet been.

I add lastly, That the very doctrine of transubstantiation had hardly got the least footstep in the Church in the days of St. Gregory; it cannot be picked out of any of his writings, no, not in that passage which Mr. Sclater hath quoted from him, † which, I presume, is the best that his friend Bellarmine could direct him to, and which hath nothing further in it, than a pretty high flight which several of the Fathers would take, when they mention the holy sacrament, and what may be well enough defended by those that reject transubstantiation to the uttermost.

The Cardinal gives us another miracle from Paschasius *de Corpore Dom.* c. 14, which our late learned reasoner is very fond of too. † "The story is of a certain godly priest that was in great distress to see with his bodily eyes the shape of him, whom he certainly believed actually present under the species of bread and wine. At length he obtained what he so long desired, and beheld the body of Christ in human shape, but in the figure of a child, which he had also most vehemently desired."

Now as to this, beside the authority of the book out of which this is taken, let us consider to what purpose this miracle was wrought, or the story of it told in this place. The Cardinal is upon the proof of Christ's bodily presence in the sacrament, and this bodily presence is so received by those of the Roman communion, that they believe that very body, which was slain upon the cross, was buried, was raised again, and went up into heaven, that that very numerical body is substantially and

* 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

† *Consensus Veterum*, p. 69.

‡ Ibid. p. 97.

entirely under the species of bread and wine, the substance of which is perfectly vanished. Let me therefore ask Mr. Sclater of Putney, because his friend the Cardinal cannot now answer for himself, did our blessed Saviour die an infant, and rise again an infant; and does he now sit at the right hand of God in the figure of a child, or in his infant state? If not (and I hope he will say it is blasphemous to think so) how then did this godly presbyter see the body of Christ as he supposed it, transubstantiated under the species of bread and wine? The substance of the bread and wine was gone into that body that had been crucified. What! was there transubstantiation upon transubstantiation, and the proper body of our Saviour gone into the substance of a child's body? It may be this made him in love with those Liturgies he quotes, wherein "the priest is blessing God for vouchsafing by him to change the immaculate body of Christ and his precious blood," &c.* To change it into what? Perhaps from that of a grown man to that of a child or infant. Well, but the Cardinal is something more wary in the story than the venturesome gentleman of Putney. For he tells us the priest had "desired to see him in this shape." If so, and if he was thus far indulged, what kind of argument is this for transubstantiation? What conviction is this, that the very self-same body that hung upon the cross, and is at the right hand of God, is brought down under the species of bread and wine? But the author adds in Bellarmine, that "it pleased God to work miracles upon a twofold account; sometimes to confirm the doubting, and sometimes for the consolation of those that fervently love him."† This we are to suppose then was not to confirm the godly priest in his faith, he needed not that, but to give him great consolation. But what? Are we to suppose so godly a presbyter as this was, to be more ravished in the view of his Saviour under the shape of a smiling, playing babe, than in that very form wherein he finished the great work of our salvation upon the cross, and wherein he is now triumphing above, in the accomplishment of what he undertook? Let him believe it that can make the doctrine of transubstantiation the reason of his conversion from the Church of England to that of Rome, and can strengthen his faith in it more firmly from some rabbinical prophecies, and such a story as this is.‡

* *Consensus Veterum*, p. 28.

† *Bellar. de Saer. Euchar. ubi supra.* [p. 702.]

‡ *Consensus Vet.* p. 21, 22, and so on, and p. 97.

I would have examined a third story of St. Anthony of Padua, but I find this done so learnedly and so effectually to my hands by a most ingenious pen,* that I had rather refer the reader thither, than needlessly swell the bulk of this note. Considering therefore how little likelihood of truth there is in many stories of this kind, or where (as to matter of fact) some of them may have been possibly true, yet how reasonably they may be accounted the tricks and impostures of evil spirits; I cannot but close this head with an expression of St. Austin to the Donatists, upon the same pretensions they had to miracles, “*Removeantur ista vel figmenta mendacium hominum, vel portenta fallacium spirituum:*† away with these, either fictions of lying men, or illusions of deceiving spirits.” For certainly, they are neither the note, nor can be the glory of any true Church. And therefore,

III. Lastly; we of the Reformed religion, as we do not pretend to the working of miracles in our age, so if we did, we could pretend to prove nothing by them but what hath been already sufficiently proved by the miracles of Christ and his Apostles.

We most humbly and thankfully adore the great condescensions of Divine grace, that hath been pleased in his first planting of Christianity, so fully and so unquestionably to confirm all the necessary articles of our belief with such strong and convincing miracles. The report of these miracles we most firmly believe: we do, without the least hesitancy, own the almighty power of God in them, and entirely embrace all that faith which they were designed to confirm and establish. We know of no other doctrines that we have any obligation to receive than what are delivered to us in the holy Scriptures, and so effectually sealed to us. We have nothing new to put off or back with the pretence of miracles, but are always ready to reject both the doctrines when they are proposed, and the miracles when they are offered in defence of them. We have no need to follow “cunningly devised fables,” since we have “a more sure word of prophecy, to which,” by God’s grace, “we will take heed.” And therefore all miracles at this time of the day are superfluous to us: for if the doctrine be not proposed to us beforehand in the written Word, ten thousand miracles could not warrant it; if it be to be found there, they may save

* Reflections on the Roman Devotions, p. 326, 327, &c.

† August. de Unitate Ecclesie, c. 16. [p. 116. Paris. 1571.]

the trouble of a miracle, because that Word of God hath been sufficiently confirmed in that way already. This Word of God is the sure rule of our faith, the great character of our hopes, and if the hearty belief of this, and humble conformity of life to it, will not secure us at last, we are contented to lose all the rewards which this Gospel hath made us to expect.

And therefore, since matters stand thus with us, the Cardinal shewed himself either a very perverse disputer, or was dropt asleep when he makes Luther in vain attempting to restore a drowned man to life ; or when he tells a much lewder story of Calvin out of Bolsec. "He represents him as hiring a poor man to feign himself dead, that so he might have the reputation of an holy and glorious prophet of God. The poor man takes the hire, feigns himself dead. Calvin comes to him, prays over him, and then takes him by the hand, commands him once and again, in the face of a great assembly, in the name of God to rise ; but the poor wretch was beyond the reach of his voice, for he was dead indeed, and all this pageantry of his, by the severe judgment of God, turned into sad earnest."* This he tells us, and much more at length, with most particular circumstances ; and yet, in the very next paragraph but one after this story,† the Cardinal quotes Calvin and others of the Reformation, pleading in defence of themselves, " that their adversaries do not deal fairly with them, to call for miracles from them, when they publish no other than the ANCIENT doctrine, confirmed by innumerable miracles of old by the Apostles and Martyrs." What ! do they openly declare that they neither pretend to miracles, nor need them in confirmation of that doctrine which they preach, because so ancient and so well confirmed already, by innumerable miracles wrought by Apostles and martyrs themselves, and yet shall it be threapt upon them that they betake themselves to such little arts of hiring poor wretches to dissemble their death, that these may have the vain glory of raising them ? Either the Cardinal should not have told this tale, or he should not have reported the answer which Calvin and others have offered in defence of themselves.

To conclude : we are so assured of the whole sum of our

* Bellarm. de Notis Eccles. l. iv. c. 14. [vol. 2. p. 125. col. 2. Prag. 1721.]

† Bellarm. ubi supra. Respondet Calvinus in Præfat. Institut. et alii, Nos injuriam eis facere, quod ab eis miracula exigimus, cum ipsi doctrinam antiquam, et innumeris miraculis ab Apostolis et Martyribus confirmatam prædicent.

faith, that it is what our blessed Lord and his Apostles have delivered to us, and we so firmly believe the truth of those miracles which they wrought to support and justify it, that we esteem it perfectly needless and superfluous to pretend to them now. Nay, let me add, that we cannot but think that our very contempt of those miracles which the late fabulous ages have vended in the world, confirms us more effectually in the belief of those which the first publishers of the Gospel wrought. Because, it seems the great artifice of that father of lies, when he saw he could not at first either defeat the power of those miracles by imitating them himself, or suppress the notice and conveyance of them to the world, he would by an after-game, in a more lazy and stupid age, advance some wonders of his own framing, some of them very absurd and ridiculous, all of them very remarkable for their superstition, and so bring the thinking and considering man to suspect, that if those miracles have the same foundation, and were carried on with the same designs as those by which Christ and his Apostles confirmed Christianity, that then they may be all equally subject to dispute and question. And it is well for those countries, where these miracles are most boasted of and seemingly believed, if they do not find a very sensible growth of atheism and irreligion amongst them.

THE
TWELFTH NOTE OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED,
VIZ.
THE LIGHT OF PROPHECY.

Duodecima Nota est Lumen Propheticum.—Bellar. de Notis Ecclesiae,
Lib. iv. cap. xv.

By the Light of Prophecy two things may be meant.

1. That divine revelation, whereby a man is enabled to foretell that such or such contingent events will certainly come to pass. In which sense, although they may be said to have the light of prophecy, who are instructed what events another hath foretold, and to whom it doth appear also that God hath communicated the certain knowledge of those events to him; yet in common speech, the light of prophecy, as it signifies the revelation of future events, is usually restrained to the person to whom such revelation was immediately made. For he only is called a prophet, who makes known to others those future events, the knowledge whereof himself had received, not from any other man, but from God, *i.e.* “who himself spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.”* Or,

2. The testimony that is given, by the fulfilling of prophecies, to some doctrine that was designed to be confirmed by it. And thus the Christian religion was demonstrated to be the true religion by the light of prophecy; since whatever the prophets from the beginning of the world had foretold concerning Christ, by the fulfilling of which he should be known, was all exactly accomplished in our Lord Jesus, and in the material circumstances of that alteration which he made in the state of religion. And in this sense we find the phrase used in the Scriptures, particularly by St. Peter:† “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until

* 2 Pet. i. 21.

† Ver. 19.

the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." Where it is evident, that St. Peter speaks of that testimony which was given to the Christian religion, by the accomplishment of prophecies, supposing it to be so clear and strong a testimony, that it would remove all doubts, if any remained, concerning the divine authority of the Gospel.

The light of prophecy in the former sense, is the knowledge of future contingencies communicated to the prophets; the light of prophecy in the latter sense, is that testimony, which by the accomplishment of their predictions, is given to others long after, for the confirmation of their faith.

Had the Cardinal clearly distinguished between these two notions, his reader might easily have seen how far the light of prophecy may be said to be a mark, by which to know the true Church, *viz.* so far as to do him and his cause no manner of service.

For in the latter sense it may be admitted to be such a mark, inasmuch as the accomplishment of those prophecies which concerned Christ, shewed that Jesus was He, and that his doctrine was of God. But then this light of prophecy comes no other way to be a mark of the true Church, than as it is an argument, or if you will call it so, a mark of that doctrine, the profession whereof makes the Church. So that when we have made the best we can of this note, the Church is still to be known by the religion it professeth, though that religion is known to be divine, as by other arguments and testimonies, so also by the accomplishment of prophecies.

And yet even here we must be something cautious in laying down the fulfilling of predictions, as an argument to prove the truth of Christianity. For there are some prophecies both in the Old and New Testament, that in part have been, and will in time be fully accomplished by such persons, whose doctrine we are by no means to follow. For Antichrist was foretold as well as Christ, and when he comes and fulfils all that has been said concerning him so long before, the accomplishment of those predictions is a mark upon him, not that we should receive, but that we should reject him and his doctrine. So that it is not barely the fulfilling of prophecies, but of such prophecies only as described the characters of that person whom we were bound to hearken to and obey in all things, that is an argument of true doctrine. And in this sense we are not unwilling to admit the light of prophecy to be a mark of the true Church, though it be a very improper way of speaking:

since the doctrine itself, which is demonstrated to be a divine doctrine, comes to be the proper note of the Church ; and the light of prophecy is left to be one of those arguments, by which the doctrine is demonstrated to be divine. But this way of marking for the Church, is very uncomfortable to the Cardinal's friends, because it will force them to acknowledge that it is not the Church that makes the religion, but the religion that makes the Church.

He therefore, finding no advantage to his cause by this notion of prophetic light, wholly insists upon the former, and makes the gift of "foretelling things to come" to be one note of the Church, and doubts not but to shew it in his own, and will not allow it to be in any other.

So that these two things must come under examination :

- I. *Whether it be a note of the Church ?*
- II. *If it be, Whether he has sufficiently proved, that they of the Roman Church have it, and no others ?*

- I. *Whether it be a note of the true Church ?*

The Cardinal offers to prove that it is, by three arguments huddled up together, which being distinguished, are these :

1. That as Christ promised the gift of miracles, so he also promised the gift of prophecy to the Church.
2. That none knows future contingencies but God only.
3. That it is a certain note of false doctrine, if a prophet foretells anything, and it does not come to pass.

Let us now see what all this will amount to.

1. Christ promised the gift of prophecy to the Church no less than the gift of miracles. To which it might be sufficient to say, that as miracles, notwithstanding such a promise, are no note of the Church ; so neither is prophecy such a note, merely because it was also promised. And there is the same reason for the one as there is for the other, for neither the one nor the other was promised to last always in the Church. And we have been told sufficiently, that the notes of the Church, according to Bellarmine himself, must be characters that are inseparable from it. Now the place by him produced, is so far from proving that the gift of prophecy should flourish in every age, that there are pregnant intimations in it of the contrary. He refers us to the prediction of Joel,* applied by St. Peter to the Church. And because he refers us to it, thither we will go, and not as he does, take things for granted

* Joel ii. [28.] Acts ii. 16.

which ought to be discoursed, but bring forth the text, and see what argument it will afford. The Apostles, as the chapter shews, "spake with tongues," to the amazement of all the strangers that heard them: but the unbelieving Jews mocked, and said they were drunk. Upon which Peter, lightly passing by that absurd reproach, told them that "this was that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions," &c. And again, "I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." Now, though prophecy, in the strict sense, signifies foretelling things to come, yet it is here put for supernatural gifts in general, and particularly for speaking divine things by inspiration, and likewise for speaking with new tongues, which is undeniably evident from hence, that the Apostles, speaking of the wonderful things of God in tongues they had never learned, was by St. Peter affirmed to be foretold in this prediction of Joel; so that the Cardinal ought to have been very much afraid to make what was promised in Joel a note of the Church, for by this means he has made it unavoidably necessary for those of his communion, the young men, and the old men, &c. to speak with tongues by inspiration, which is in effect to unchurch his own party. And therefore I imagine his followers will not follow him in this, nor advance the promise in Joel into a note of the Church, but will rather say, that the fulfilling of it in the first age of the Church, was a testimony to the truth of Christianity, and that the prediction of Joel was accomplished, though the same extraordinary gifts were not continued in every age afterward.

2. He says, "that none knows future contingencies but God only;" which if it should prove that a Church is there, where the gift of prophecy is, yet it does not prove that there is no Church where that gift is not, unless it be an inseparable mark of the Church, to have all those future events made known to one or other in it, which God only knows. Our Saviour said, "of that day and hour (when himself shall come to judge the world) no man knoweth, but the Father only." Does it therefore follow that God must have revealed it to one or other in the Church? If because God only knows future contingencies, it follows that the Church must know them too by revelation from him; then it follows also that the Church must know all things that are to happen hereafter,

because it is God only that can communicate such knowledge. If he meant that those who have any degree of it, must necessarily belong to the Church, because God only can give it; neither is this true, as I shall presently shew: nor, if it were, could the gift of foretelling some things be for this reason a note of the Church, unless also the want of this gift should be a demonstration against any communion, that it is not a true Church, which I am sure can never be proved from hence, that none but God can bestow it.

3. He adds, that in Deut. xviii. it is laid down for a note of false doctrine, "If a prophet foretells any thing, and it does not come to pass." Now,

First, This argument is very impertinent, unless as lying prophecy is said to be a note of false doctrine, so false doctrine be also supposed a note of a false Church; which is a very dangerous supposition to a Church, that had rather be tried by any other note than that of the truth of her doctrine: for it seems, if we can clearly prove by any good argument, that she professeth false doctrine, it follows without more to do, that she is no true Church. But,

Secondly, It is not said in the place cited by the Cardinal, that false prophecy is a note of false doctrine; but that it is a note, or rather an argument, that the prophet had no commission from God to say, that such an event should come to pass. Nor does it follow from hence, that the false prophet must needs be a heretic, unless it be impossible for a catholic or an orthodox professor to tell a lie, which I think no man will be so hardy as to say.

Thirdly, Much less is it said, that a prophet's foretelling rightly a future contingent event, is a note of true doctrine, which had been necessary to make true prophecy a note of the true Church. Nay, on the other hand, there is express caution given not long before, against being seduced into idolatry by true predictions. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods——Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet——For the Lord your God proveth you, &c."*

Which shews the confidence of the Cardinal in pronouncing so peremptorily, that there "have been no true predictions

* Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

amongst heathen and heretics, unless perhaps for a testimony to our faith." For this warning plainly supposed, that such predictions there would be, not to confirm believers in the truth, but to prove their constancy under a temptation to error. They must indeed be false prophets, as that signifies false teachers, who should endeavour to gain authority to impious doctrines and to idolatrous practices, by appealing to the truth of their own predictions: but yet they were to be true prophets in respect of the events which they would foretell. And therefore to pretend that heathens and heretics never foretold any contingency which came to pass, but when providence designed a farther testimony to confirm us in the faith, is, to speak gently, a wretched mistake; and there is no more difficulty in this point, than whether we are to believe God or Bellarmine.

But if there had been no true prophecies amongst heathens, besides those which were designed for a testimony to the Christian faith; yet even these are a manifest argument, that the gift of prophecy is no certain note of the Church; nay, they prove it more evidently than any other prophecies could do; because those predictions surely have the most unquestionable truth, which were made for a testimony to true doctrine. Of which kind that there had been several amongst the Gentiles, seems very probable from those remains thereof, which we meet with in Virgil* and Tacitus. Not to insist upon that famous acrostic of Sibylla Erythraea in Lactantius† and Eusebius, which it is certain that Cicero had seen; nor what Justin Martyr,‡ and Clemens Alexandrinus say of the books of Hybstaspes; I shall only note what St. Austin§ says of this matter, *viz.* "That Christ was not foretold in Israel only, but in other nations also; and that predictions concerning Christ may be met with in the books of those who are strangers to Israel, and that it is not incongruous to believe that this mystery was revealed to men of other nations. Which things," saith he, "may be mentioned as advantages on our side, over and above what is necessary." Now will any man say that these predictions did less shew a prophetic light amongst the Gentiles, because they were true? With what conscience, therefore,

* Eclog. iv.

† De Divin. 2.

‡ Apol. 2. [Apol. 1. p. 55. 70. Par. 1742.] Strom. 1. 6. [p. 762. Venet. 1757.]

§ Ep. 49. Qu. 2. [vol. 2. p. 278. Par. 1679.] De Civitate Dei. lib. 18. c. 47. [Ibid. vol. 7. p. 530.]

could Bellarmine shuffle off those famous predictions of Balaam,* a heathen soothsayer, concerning Christ (to which he adds those of the Sibyls), by saying that they were a testimony to our faith? As if the argument were not so much the stronger, that the gift of true prophecy is not confined within the communion of the Church. Surely he could not be ignorant, that the Old Testament itself is called the Word of Prophecy,† and that the main predictions thereof were for a testimony to confirm us in the faith. But by the same reason that he strikes off the true predictions of heathens from being an instance of prophetic light, because forsooth they were for the confirmation of our faith; he must also set aside the best evidence of prophetic light within the communion of the Church; the predictions whereof were no less, but more than any others for a testimony to our faith.

As to the oracles of Apollo, which he does well to reject from being true prophecies, we need not to offer them for the disparagement of this note of prophetic light; since they might be deceitful; and yet the light of prophecy neither be always in the Church, nor never amongst those that are out of it.

But when he tells us, "That heretics are deceived as often as they would foretell any thing;" and "that this appears from the false prophets in the Old Testament;" it is a pitiful thing that such a man should think it enough to prove a conclusion so general by a particular instance. He refers us to 1 Kings xxii. where we find that Ahab's prophets spake by a lying spirit. But does this prove that heretics never prophesy truly? There were some false prophets amongst the Ten Tribes upon their revolt, therefore there never were any true ones. How comes it then to pass, that there were so many of the Lord's prophets amongst them,‡ that at one time Obadiah hid an hundred of them? There were some false prophets amongst the Jews; were all the Jewish prophets therefore deceived, when they pretended to foretell any thing? We find that God charged the prophets of Jerusalem, no less than those of Samaria, with imposture;§ "with running before they were sent, and prophesying when God had not spoken to them, and with prophesying lies in his name," and a great deal more to this purpose. Therefore, by the Cardinal's logic, it appears by "the false prophets in the Old Testament, that catholics are deceived as often as they would foretell any thing."

* Numb. xxiv. 15, &c.

† 2 Pet. i. 19.

‡ 1 King. xviii. 4.

§ Jerem. xxiii. 14, 21, 25, &c.

To conclude this matter, since the Cardinal seemed to take a particular delight in proving his notes of the Church out of the Old Testament ; I shall leave this one argument out of the Old Testament, against his present note of prophetic light. To make it a note of the Church, it is necessary that there should have been no true prophecy but in the Church, which is notoriously false ; because Balaam, who was but a heathen diviner, prophesied truly of Christ. It is necessary also, that this gift should always have continued in the Church, which is alike false ; because there was no prophet amongst the Jews, between Malachi and Zachary the father of John the Baptist, that is, for about four hundred years together.

And thus much concerning the first inquiry, “Whether prophetic light be a note of the Church.” I come now to the second.

II. *If it be such a note, whether the Cardinal hath sufficiently proved, that they of the Roman Church have it, and no other?*

He pretends to prove, that there have been prophets in the catholic Church ; which nobody denies. But you must know, that the catholic Church is a term of art, which these masters, to the abuse of names and words, as well as of things and persons, are resolved shall signify the Roman Church. Well ; let the Roman Church be their catholic Church ; with us it is but the Roman : and now that we understand one another, how does he prove that there have been prophets amongst them ? Why, he produces the prophets of the Old Testament, and those that prophesied for five hundred years after Christ ! Agabus, for instance, who is mentioned in the Acts, ch. xi. &c. Now by this I perceive that it was warily done of the Cardinal, and not in course, to call his Church the catholic Church ; for if he had produced the prophets of the Old Testament, and Agabus with the prophets of the New, to prove that the Roman Church has had prophets, it had looked so simply, that the Cardinal himself could not have borne it. But this is one of their old fetches, that when they would get any credit by the Prophets and the Apostles, they call themselves the catholic Church ; and then because the Prophets and Apostles belonged to the catholic Church, they must belong to them, and to no Christians of any communion but theirs. But how, I pray, comes it to pass, that we have less interest in the Prophets, the Apostles, and the primitive Christians, than the Roman Church has ; nay, that we have none, and they have all ? One thing

I am sure of, that if our doctrines and theirs be severally compared with the writings of those renowned ancients, it will not be hard to say who are their children, they or we, and that they are our predecessors and parents, and not theirs ; in all those points wherein we differ from them. And, therefore, since it is in behalf of those particulars wherein we have left the Church of Rome, that the prophetic light of the Old and New Testament is produced as an argument, that the Roman Church has had prophets ; we have some reason to think, that the Cardinal, by producing the Prophets of both Testaments in this cause, has given us a terrible weapon against himself, and by their prophetic light discovered, that if the Roman Church and ours cannot be parts of the same Church, then we, who have the Prophets and Apostles with us in the doctrine we maintain, are a true Church exclusively to them and not they to us.

In the next place, we are told of Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Anthony, and John the anchoret, whose predictions are related by St. Basil, Athanasius, and Austin. Now Gregory was bishop of Cæsarea, Anthony an Egyptian monk, and John an anchoret in a certain wilderness of Egypt. But how all this proves that there have been prophets in the Roman Church, is never to be made out otherwise, than by supposing the Greek and the Egyptian Churches to signify the Roman Church, by the same figure that the catholic Church and that of Rome are all one.

The express testimonies he brings are concerning St. Benedict, St. Bernard, and St. Francis. St. Benedict told Totila that he should reign nine years, and die the tenth ; which, as Gregory saith, happened accordingly. St. Bernard foretold the conversion of four unlikely persons ; and, which was very admirable, as Bellarmine affirms, when he was desired to pray for the conversion of a certain nobleman : “ Fear not,” says he, “ I shall bury him a perfect monk in this very place of Claravall.” Upon which the Cardinal cries out, “ How many prophecies are there in this one sentence ? For that he should one day be a monk, and persevere therein to the death, and end his days in a holy sort, and that before St. Bernard’s death, and this in Claravall, and that he should be buried by St. Bernard’s own hands ; are six distinct prophecies, and all of them not without God’s singular providence fulfilled.” As for St. Francis, “ He admonished the generals of the Christian army not to fight upon such a day with the Saracens, for God had

revealed to him, that upon that day they would be beaten." But they, contemning the admonition of blessed Francis, fought, and were overthrown with a miserable slaughter. And "many more things of the same kind," the Cardinal assures us, might be added. And if he had none of a better kind than these, he ought to have produced his "many more," and at least have give us number for weight.

Now though I could very willingly give him all his three stories, yet I am loth to be thought so silly, as to take every thing of this kind for Gospel, which we are told by Bonaventure, that wrote the life of St. Francis, or by Gofrid, that wrote that part of St. Bernard's life, where the Cardinal finds him a prophet; no, nor by Gregory himself, in the second book of his Dialogues, concerning the life and miracles of Benedict the abbot. The story of the blackbird,* that went off with the sign of the cross, and that other of the little black boy, invisible to all till Benedict saw him, that drew away the idle monk from his prayers; with many more such rank fables as these are, do plainly shew, that Pope Gregory had credulity enough to have lived in the age of Gofrid, or in that which next followed, of Bonaventure, who is never to be forgotten for his devotion to the Virgin.

But allowing these stories to be well attested, let us see how the Cardinal proves by them that the Church of Rome has the gift of prophecy. Why, he tells us, that these monastics were "addicted to the Pope." Now how much Benedict "was addicted to the Pope," is not worth inquiry; since his prophetic gift will do the Church of Rome no service, now that she is so vastly altered from what she was in Pope Gregory's days, who wrote the Abbot's life, as has lately been proved beyond possibility of confutation.† As for St. Bernard, he was certainly very far from being addicted to the Pope, who besides his sharp reproofs of Eugenius,‡ told him in plain terms, that "he was not a Lord of the bishops, but one of them." So that if his prophecies too must go for the credit of that communion that agrees most with him in doctrine, we shall put hard to get the prophet on our side, by shewing that there was good reason to put him into the *Catalogus Testium Veritatis*. But for St. Francis, we are very willing to let the Church of Rome take him, and his prophecy, and to make

* Dial. lib. 2. cap. 2. 4. [vol. 2. p. 214, 221. Par. 1705.]

† Vindication of the Answer to some late Papers, p. 72.

‡ De consider. ad Eugen. 1. 3. [1. 4. c. 7. vol. 1. p. 444. Par. 1690.]

the best of it they can. It is so very trifling a business, that the Cardinal's making use of such stories to support so magnificent a pretence, as that of prophetic light in his Church, plainly shews, that either he was, or ought at least to have been troubled that he had no better.

He should have remembered the just exceptions he brought against the heathen oracles ; and since he appealed to the Old Testament for this his note of the Church, he had done well to consider the vast difference between the predictions of the prophets there on the one side, and not only between those oracles, but these his petty predictions also on the other. And then certainly he would have been ashamed of these proofs of a gift of prophecy, amongst those of his own party, which he brings when he would apply this note to his Church.

I grant that the predictions of the holy Scriptures are not all of a size, and though all the prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, yet some of their predictions had incomparably more clear and unquestionable characters of divinity upon them than others had. And those were the predictions designed to give testimony to our faith, of which kind those of the Old Testament made it to be the "word of prophecy." For there we find, that divers matters of fact were foretold many ages, and some of them thousands of years before the event ; that the time when such and such things should happen, is described by the fall of empires, not then begun when the prophet spake, nor to begin for some hundreds of years after ; that such circumstances were at so vast a distance of time foretold, that it was impossible for any created understanding so much as to guess at them, so long before they came to pass ; in a word, that the several things which the prophets at sundry times foretold concerning Christ, met in Jesus, and conspired in bearing witness to him ; the evidence of that testimony being unanswerable, when all things were laid together : for this was the method our Saviour took to confirm his two doubting disciples, "He began at Moses and **ALL** the prophets, and expounded unto them in **ALL** the Scriptures, the things concerning himself."*

Not that there were no illustrious predictions before Christ, but such as were to be fulfilled in him ; for many there were that received their accomplishment before : such as that of the birth of Josiah by name,† three hundred years before he

* Luke xxiv. 27.
VOL. IV.

† 1 Kings xiii. 2.
E

was born, and his burning upon the altar at Bethel* the priests' bones that had offered incense there. And that of restoring the Jews by Cyrus the Persian,† though neither he nor the Persian empire was yet in being, no, nor the captivity begun from which he was to release them. The fulfilling of such predictions as these, was a sort of testimony to the truth of the prophecies concerning Christ, till the time came when the answerableness of the event should above all things shew that they also were divine.

If a man would make the gift of prophecy a note of the Church, and then apply it to his own, one would expect that he should bring forth some such predictions as those of the Scriptures, which are beyond all exception divine, for the carrying on of his purpose. But instead of that, to bring two or three thin stories, one of which is a prediction of an event that was to happen the same day, is to expose a man's cause to the contempt of a heathen, if he were here, who could out of good authorities produce more notable predictions of soothsayers, augurs, and pagan priests, that came to pass. It is a shame to see what pains the Cardinal took to split St. Bernard's prediction concerning the nobleman's turning monk, into six several prophecies, after honest Gofrid could find but two there. If this were a place to make sport, it would be no unpleasant work to be a little severe in casting up the account again. But certainly if a heathen were to read this twelfth note of the Cardinal, and there find the gift of prophecy made a mark of the society that is united by true religion, as he would guess the Church means, he would be apt to think that Christians could produce no better prophecies than these of Bellarmine's collecting, to prove there has been a prophetic light in the Church; which if it were true of the catholic Church in all ages, would be no little disparagement to it; and being true of the Roman Church, is no less a disparagement to that, if the gift of prophecy be a note: for if the Cardinal had better, why did he not produce them?

I do not by any means deny, that some predictions may be truly divine, which yet are far from having the unquestionable characters of divinity upon them. One man may by his skill in those affairs, foresee the loss of a battle, which no man but himself comprehends the reason of. Another may boldly and at all adventure foretell it without reason, and pretend a reve-

* 2 Kings xxiii. 16.

† Isa. xliv. 28, xlvi. 4. Ezra i. 1.

lation for it. And yet Micaiah, in the case of Ahab, foretold such a thing by divine revelation. But then they are not such predictions as these, that will of themselves serve a man's turn to prove the gift of prophecy to be in his communion. In conjunction with others that are unquestionably divine, they may be brought into the argument, but not alone; because it is so very difficult to distinguish them from predictions that are not divine, when they are abstracted from other considerations.

I am also as willing to grant, that since the unquestionably divine predictions of the Old and New Testament, when God poured out the spirit of prophecy upon his servants, there have been now and then in the Church some sprinklings of it, and that several persons have foretold things by divine revelation, which had no evidence of it comparable to what the great strokes of Scripture prophecy have. Such a prediction I would allow that of Benedict to be, which the Cardinal cites, if one had good reason to believe it. And I would not much quarrel with that which Gofrid tells of St. Bernard, though I have no great opinion of it. But for St. Francis, I desire to be wholly excused. Which I do not say, as if there were any danger of granting that there has been something of this lower degree of prophecy among some in the Roman communion: for if prophetic light were a note of the Church, it is not the foretelling of a few events that happen not long after the prediction, which will amount to it, though there may be more reason, upon the account of the holiness of the person, or some such other consideration, to ascribe it to a divine revelation, than to any other cause. As there are some divine miracles that have "the finger of God," while others are hard to be distinguished from delusions and lying wonders: so some divine predictions there are which have the characters of God's omniscience upon them, while others are capable of being resolved into other causes: but he must be at a great loss for Church marks, that would mark his Church by prophetic light without the former.

As for the latter, I have said once already, and I say it again, that they may, nay, I am apt to think that they have had some such in the Roman communion. But the Cardinal is very unlucky in his instances, as some others of that Church are whom I have consulted. I cannot see why such ado should be made about the predictions of Philippus Nerius the Florentine, that care must be taken to preserve the attestations

of them. When he could not persuade a Jew to pray to Christ for himself,* he desired the standers by to pray for him, promising them that he would be converted ; which came to pass, as we are told, in a few days. Again, when one of his converts† had lent a sum of money to a banker, he made him go and fetch it back before night, though he knew not the man ; and within a few days the banker broke. Sometimes he foretold that such a sick man would die ; and sometimes that such an one would recover ; which predictions are as modest as may be : but no other reason can be given, I think, why Nerius must for such things as these pass for a prophet, but that they cannot write the lives of their saints, without stuffing them, as with miracles and visions and ecstasies, so sometimes with prophecies too, and then they must be content with such as can be had. The good writer of St. Rose's life‡ took great pains to make her a prophetess not long before her death : for she, forsooth, knew by divine inspiration, that a convent of St. Katharine of Sienna would be built, and this, ten years before the foundation was laid ; she had it shewn sometimes by signs and figures, sometimes in the exact fashion and model, and would talk of it as if she had it before her eyes ; she drew it out upon a paper, and she could tell who would be the first abbess there, knew her by face, and after a sort consecrated her by a kiss, insomuch that some thought she was mad.

It is as hard to believe that the spirit of prophecy should be given to a maid, for no other end, as it should seem by this story, but to get her the fame of a prophetess, as that the ludicrous miracles, that do no manner of good, are the marks of divine power.

It may be reasonable to believe that some measure of this gift is imparted, when not only the event answers the prediction, but when the end aimed at is great and good, and of general use, as when God sent prophets to his people "to bring them back to the law." I should therefore make no difficulty to allow that Hieronymus Savonarola, a very religious friar in Florence, was sometimes enlightened with prophetic knowledge, because he did not only foretell several things that happened, some in his life-time, some after his death, and others that are yet to come to pass ; but his business was plainly this, to awaken men to repentance, and to

* Vita Phil. Ner. p. 76. Mog.

† P. 100.

‡ S. Rose Vita. c. 18.

forewarn the great ones themselves of the judgments of God hanging over them, if they would not do their parts to restore good discipline and good manners to the Church. Thus, as Philip de Commines tell us,* he assured Charles VIII. that he should be very prosperous in his voyage into Italy, and this that he might reform the corrupt state of the Church, which if he should neglect to do, he should return with dis-honour, and God would reserve that work for another; and so it happened. He was a man of singular virtue and piety, and obtained the reputation of a prophet, not only with the greatest part of the people,† but with such men as Philip de Commines, who knew him well, and that noble earl, Jo. Franciscus Picus, who wrote his life. To which we may add, that he was served as God's prophets sometimes have been, being put to death at the instigation of the Pope. And for what reason do we think? but because he prophesied against the simony, whoredoms, and profaneness that reigned in the Church; for which he was accused of preaching scandalously against the manners of the clergy and court of Rome.‡ In short, he was silenced by Pope Alexander VI., and at length, upon the Pope's process against him, he with two of his companions were tormented, and all to make him deny that he had received those things from God which he had said, and after horrible tortures, which he endured with great patience, he and they were at once hanged and burned;§ to the everlasting infamy of somebody, and no less to their confusion, who will needs have it believed that there have been prophets in the Roman communion.

Savonarola was put to death in the year 1498, a little before the Reformation. It was about 150 years before that, that Joannes de Rupe Scissa, such another man as Savonarola, and a monk, prophesied to the same purpose that he did after him, foretelling several things that happened afterwards in the kingdom of France; but running out into the reproof of the luxury and vices of the Pope, and the great churchmen, Pope Innocent laid hold on him, and kept him in prison, as Frossard acquaints us,|| who relate these things at large. If there were room for it, I believe some more instances of this kind might be added, to shew that which Bellarmine has aimed at,

* Chron. du Roy, &c. ch. 25. p. 338.

† Guicciard. Hist. lib. ii. p. 42. [Translation by Fenton, Lond. 1579, p. 82.]

‡ Lib. iii. p. 94.

§ Vita Savonar.

|| Frossard. Chron. tom. 1, 2.

but failed of doing, *viz.* "that they have had in their communion some persons who cannot reasonably be denied to have had the revelation of some future events." But let the instance of Savonarola be by no means forgotten, for it is the clearest of any that I ever yet met with for that purpose, and which is something more, his story stands upon better authorities far than that of Gofrid, or that of Bonaventure. And thus having found out prophets for them, let the Cardinal's followers make the best on it.

For what remains; the Cardinal's proof that Luther had nothing of the gift of prophecy, is very insufficient, allowing Cochleus's story, that Luther said that the Popes and Cardinals, &c. would all vanish, if he himself should go on to preach two years longer. It does by no means appear that he spake this with a pretence to the spirit of prophecy, but it is rather evident that he did not, since his belief of this success was grounded upon the supposition of his preaching so much longer. Nor was it very much to be admired, if a man of his fervent spirit, who had in so little time drawn off such multitudes from their dependence upon the Roman see, should promise himself, in so good a cause, that the Papacy would in a short time be generally forsaken. The event indeed was not answerable to his assurance; and this shewed that he was mistaken in his opinion; but there was nothing of the false prophet in the case.

Melanthon, who may be believed concerning Luther,* as well as Bonaventure concerning St. Francis, tells us of several things that Luther foretold; others say the same thing for Melanthon. The prediction of John Huss, that an hundred years after, they that burned him should have to do with a swan that would find them work; and the event proving accordingly, is known by all. These are things we think fit to observe; but we are of a Church that does not put us upon that hard service, as to make a note out of them. For that Church that has the true notes, does not need any false ones.

* Vita Lutheri a Melanct.

THE
THIRTEENTH NOTE OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED,
VIZ.,
THE CONFESSION OF ADVERSARIES.

Decima tertia Nota est Confessio Adversariorum.—Bellar. de Notis
Ecclesiarum, Lib. iv. cap. xvi.

THE substance of what the Cardinal contends for in this chapter, amounts to no more than this; “that the force of truth is so great, that the enemies of it are constrained to bear witness to it.” And whereas Catholics (by which he means the Christians of the Roman communion) neither praise nor approve either the doctrine, or life of heathens or heretics, but affirm them all to err, who follow not their doctrine; yet Pagans, Jews, Turks, and heretics speak well of them. This he accounts an argument that they are in the right, the confession of enemies being very considerable in this case. And that their enemies do bear this testimony, he attempts to prove by an induction of particulars from the writings of Pagans, Jews, &c. which shall be considered in due place. For the clearing of this whole matter, I shall do these things:

I. *Inquire whether this confession of enemies be indeed a note of the Church, or not.*

II. *If that should be granted, the next inquiry will be, whether or not the particulars produced by the Cardinal do evince, that this note is peculiar to the Roman Church, exclusively to other Christians that are not of her communion.*

III. *I shall examine the question a little further, and more especially the testimony of the Jews.*

I. *Inquire whether this confession of enemies be indeed a note of the Church, or not.*

If it be no note, the Cardinal might have spared the pains

of this chapter. And that it is none, I make no doubt to make appear beyond all exception : and here I appeal to the Cardinal himself ; nor shall I need any other argument to prove it to be none, than what I borrow from him. He hath told us, cap. 2. “ what things are required to constitute notes of the Church ; ” and I am well content in this matter to be concluded by him. He tells us, amongst other things, “ that true notes are inseparable from the true Church.” In this we are agreed, and shall easily allow this “ confession of adversaries ” to be a true note, if it be inseparable from the true Church. But if the true Church may be without it, it can be no true note of it. For that can never bring me to the certain knowledge of a thing, which may or may not belong to it, and is so far from being essential to it, that the thing may not only be without it, but must be before this can belong to it, and will continue to be, though this should not be at all. This is plainly the case : the Church of Rome must be the true Church (as the Cardinal pretends), because Jews, Pagans, and Turks, &c. bear witness to her. But this confession of her adversaries is essential, and an inseparable mark of this Church, or it is not. If it be not, it can be no true note. And if it be, then the true Church cannot be without it, and we could not have known it to be a true Church, if it had not happened that Jews and Pagans, &c. had borne their testimony to her ; so that upon the matter, the Church is much beholden to her enemies for this note ; for had they not chanced to have spoken well of her, this note had been quite lost ; and yet it is absurd to suppose she could be without a note, which is, according to the Cardinal, something that is inseparable. Certainly the true Church must be before she had any enemies, and might have continued a true Church, if these enemies had not spoken well of her at all ; and therefore it is very absurd to make this confession of her adversaries an inseparable note that she is a true Church, when if she ever were a true Church, she must be so before these adversaries did testify of her.

There was a time, in the infancy of the Christian Church, when the Church was “everywhere spoken against,”* and when the whole Christian religion was by its adversaries called heresy : a time there was before the adversaries of the Church, pagans

* Acts xxviii. 22, with chap. xxiv. 5, 14.

and heretics, &c. had made this confession. The Church at that time was no true Church, or else this confession of adversaries is no inseparable note of it. Either there was no true Church in that primitive time, or else this confession of enemies must be discharged from being a note.

But this confession is a note of the Cardinal's making. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, never made it one. So far was he from making this a note of the true Church, that he rather makes it a sign of the contrary. "Woe unto you," says he, "when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets," Luke vi. 26. Our Lord calls them "blessed," Matth. v. 11. (and certainly he speaks not of them that were out of the true Church) "that are reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them." He pronounced them "blessed," Luke vi. 22, 23, "who are reproached, and whose name is cast out as evil;" he bids them "rejoice in that day, and be exceeding glad." St. Peter reckons the "reproaches for the name of Christ a glory and happiness," 1 Pet. iv. 14. And Simeon foretold of Jesus, Luke ii. 34, that he was set for a "sign which shall be spoken against." And "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," says the great Apostle of the Gentiles, 1 Cor. i. 23.

So far is this confession of adversaries from being a note of a true Church, as the Cardinal would make it, that the reproaches and scoffs of enemies is no reflection upon the true Church of Christ. The worst of men do not use to treat the best things well: and when these bad men are enemies, they do no prejudice with wise men by their invectives and reproaches. Tertullian* concludes the Christian religion good, because Nero, one of the worst of men, bent his force against it. The Church will want nothing that is required, though Jews and Pagans should with one consent perpetually declaim against her.

In a word, this confession of adversaries, of what use soever it may be, can be no note; for it is contingent and arbitrary, and lies at the pleasure of those who are not only out of the Church, but enemies to it; and in the infancy of Christianity the Church was without this note; and if that be allowed to be a true Church, this can be no true note of it.

* Qui enim scit illum, intelligere potest non nisi aliquid bonum grande a Nerone damnatum. Tertul. Apol. [p. 6. Par. 1695.]

II. But if it should be granted that this is a true note, the next inquiry will be, *whether or not the particulars produced by the Cardinal do evince that this note is peculiar to the Roman Church, exclusively to other Christians that are not of her communion?*

It is certain that by the true Church (the notes whereof the Cardinal attempts to give us), he means only the Church of Rome. And what in the beginning of his book* he calls the true Church, he calls afterwards our Church, and makes them both one and the same: at last it comes to "our catholic Church" with him.

So that this note of his, which he calls "the confession of enemies," must belong peculiarly to the Roman Church, or else it will do him no service. For this is a rule which the Cardinal hath laid down, "that notes must be proper and not common."[†] For, says he, if I would describe a certain man to one who knows him not, I must not say that he is one who hath two eyes and hands, &c. because these are common things, and he will never find him by such common descriptions as these. According to this account, we may justly expect that when the Cardinal produceth the confession of adversaries in behalf of the Church, he should produce witnesses who speak of that very Church of which he makes this confession a note, else these witnesses prove nothing to his purpose. If they should chance only to speak some favourable words of Christianity, or of some few Christians, this will be short of what they are produced for in this place. And whatever good use may be made of their confession, yet it will not belong peculiarly to the Church of Rome. They must speak to the Church of Rome, and in her behalf, or else the Cardinal had better have spared them: they will do him no service if they do not make good his note; and that cannot be done, if they witness not in behalf of the Roman Church. It is time now to call the witnesses, and hear what they have to say in behalf of the Church of Rome.

And here, not to invert that order which the Cardinal hath taken, we will begin with the pagans, and see what they have to say in behalf of the Church of Rome. The Cardinal begins with Pliny the second: he, in his epistle to the Emperor Trajan, gives this testimony in behalf of Christians, *viz.* "That they detested

* V. C. vi. [vol. 2. p. 219. Ingolst. 1601.] et C. ix. [Ibid. p. 231.] et C. xi. [Ibid. p. 249.]

† C. ii. [Ibid. p. 204.]

all vices, lived most holily, and were blameable on this account only, that they were too forward to part with their lives for their God ; and they rose up before day to sing praises to Christ.” But what is all this to the Church of Rome, especially as it is now constituted, and distinguished from other Christians which are not of her communion, and do not own themselves subject to the bishop of that Church ? He speaks well of Christians, and we allow that those of the Church of Rome at that time were such : we have no quarrel with the Christians of the Roman Church who lived in the days of Trajan. Pliny speaks well of them ; he does so indeed : but what does he say ? Does he say that they worshipped images, or that they adored the host ? That they prayed to saints, and made use of several intercessors ? That they deserved favour because they came so near the pagans in these things ? He says no such thing. He tells us “that they lived well, and detested vices ; that they sang praises to Jesus, and were willing to die for God.” Did we ever find fault with any of the Church of Rome for their good lives, or the hymns of praise which they sing to Christ ? Have we ever quarrelled with them for detesting vices, or exposing their lives for the honour of the true God ? He commends the Christians that lived then, but not for any thing which they either believed or practised, which is now a matter of controversy between us and the present Church of Rome. Pliny commends the ancient Christians : be it so : why must this be restrained to the Church of Rome ? Were there no Christians but what were in communion with and were subject to the Roman Church ? He commends the Christians of that time : but will this justify them who afterwards shall call themselves by that name ? He commends them for their good lives, their love to God, and gratitude to their Saviour : will this justify the present Church of Rome ? Will it serve to defend the worship of images, or prayers to the blessed Virgin, and invocation of saints ? Does it appear that there were no Christians in the world but those of the Church of Rome, and that that Church was then what it is now ?

What the Cardinal produceth afterwards hath no greater force than this testimony of Pliny. Tertullian tells us that the heathens would not hear the cause of Christians, whom they knew to be guiltless, but condemned it at all adventures ; and that the best emperors favoured Christianity, and that it was persecuted by the worst. All this, however it may serve

the common Christianity, does not make for the purpose for which the Cardinal does produce it.

The same may be said as to what he mentions of the efficacy of the prayers of the Christian soldiers from the epistle of M. Aurelius ; and if St. Anthony, St. Hilarion, and St. Martin were reverenced by the pagans, I do not so much as imagine what service this will be to the cause the Cardinal hath undertaken to defend, or what prejudice it will be to ours. So that hitherto here is nothing said to the purpose in hand, nothing said but what the Protestants may as well apply to themselves as the Church of Rome.

His next set of witnesses are Jews ; if we examine them, we shall only find that he hath wisely made choice of two great names, but that neither of them speak one word to the purpose : his authors are Josephus the historian, and Philo Judæus : two incomparable authors they are, and by no means to be excepted against. Here is the mischief, that neither of them have a syllable that makes for the defence of the Church of Rome, or the prejudice of the Reformed. However, let us hear them speak : and first let us hear what Josephus, the elder of the two, hath to say : it is this, “ That Jesus was a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man ; that he was the effector of wondrous works, &c. and that he was the Christ or Messias.”* By the way, the Cardinal makes Josephus speak nonsense, as he reports his testimony ; for he says not only that Josephus does affirm Christ to be more than a man, but that he was truly the Messias : now Josephus would never speak at this rate ; to affirm that Christ is the Messias is to affirm that Christ is Christ ; for the Messias and Christ are the same. Josephus affirms that Jesus lived at that time which he mentions, and that Jesus was the Christ or Messias. But to let this pass, I grant that Josephus affirms that Jesus was the Christ ; what is this to the Church of Rome any farther than it concerns our common Christianity ? I would fain know why the Cardinal produceth this in behalf of his Church ; or what reason can be assigned why Protestants may not as well apply it to their own. The common Christianity is concerned in such a testimony, and so far the Roman Church is also. But set aside that consideration, and take the Church of Rome as the Cardinal does, as distinct from, and opposed to other Christians that are not of her communion, and I dare say I will produce

* Joseph. Antiq. Jud. l. 18. c. 6. [c. 3. vol. 1. p. 876. Amstelod. 1726.]

testimonies as pertinent as this of Josephus out of any page of Homer's Iliads, or the Commentaries of Julius Cæsar. For what coherence is there between these two propositions, "Josephus confesseth that Jesus was the Christ, therefore the Church of Rome is the catholic Church?" And yet this is in truth the Cardinal's way of arguing.

Let us hear next what Philo Judæus hath to say in behalf of the Christians of the Church of Rome. Now it would be to me a wonderful thing to find Philo say any thing in behalf of those Christians, when he never once mentions the name of Christian in all his works. Yet the Cardinal hath the confidence to affirm that Philo hath written a famous book of the praises of those Christians who lived in Egypt under St. Mark the Evangelist. After this his positive affirmation that Philo had written such a book, as being sensible that Philo hath no book that beareth any such title, he adds the testimony of some of the ancients that Philo meant the Christians, and not any sect of the Jews, as the Centuriators would have. I do not think it worth my while to examine his ancient writers which he quotes for his opinion: I will for once take it for granted that Philo* means the Christians of whom he gives so good a character, under the title of *Therapeutæ*.

Let it be so; what is this to the business? Because those Christians in Egypt were good men, and such as Philo describes them, must therefore the Church of Rome be the catholic Church?

The next witnesses which the Cardinal produceth are Turks: he tells us that in the Alcoran it is said, that Christians are saved, that Christ was the greatest of prophets, and had the soul of God; and that the Sultan of Egypt reverenced St. Francis, whom he knew to be a Christian and a Catholic. To what purpose all this is produced I do not understand: I am sure it cannot serve that of the Church of Rome, as she stands separated from other Christians. And if it be a testimony in behalf of our common Christianity, then all Christians are concerned in it as well as those of the Church of Rome. The Alcoran will do the Cardinal no service, unless he could have produced some testimony peculiar to the Roman Church, or that might have justified the worship of images, adoration of the host, the doctrine of transubstantiation, or some of those doctrines and practices peculiar to that Church.

* Philo Judæus de Vita Contemplativa.

The last set of witnesses produced by the Cardinal, he calls heretics. A man would think the case very desperate that needs such witnesses. But yet I find the Church of Rome does not disdain such as these, when they speak of her side. But in the present question we shall find they do that Church no service: the substance of what the Cardinal allegeth, is what follows, *viz.* that an Arian king honoured St. Benedict a Catholic; that Luther, when a heretic, owned, that in the Papacy were many good things, nay, all that was good, *e. g.* the true Scripture, baptism, &c. That Calvin calls Bernard, a pious writer, and yet he was a Papist. That another Protestant acknowledgeth Bernard, Dominic, and Francis, to be holy men; to which he adds a passage of Cochlaeus, who reports an article of agreement, wherein the Protestant Helvetians write, that they would dismiss their confederates quiet, as to their true, undoubted, and their catholic faith.

From all which I see not what he can collect for the interest of the Church of Rome. We do honour every man that is good in the Church of Rome: but this does not infer that we justify all her doctrines. We own that they have the true Scripture and sacraments, but this does not justify their addition of Apocryphal books to the canon of the Scriptures, nor of more sacraments than were owned to be strictly so in the ancient Church. We will allow that there have been pious and holy men of that Church, and are not scrupulous in calling them by the name by which they are commonly known and distinguished from others. Much good may do them with such witnesses as Calvin and Luther, who did to the last bear testimony against the corruptions and innovations of that Church.

III. *I shall examine the question a little farther, and more especially the testimony of the Jews.*

I might make many remarks upon what the Cardinal affirms, that whereas Catholics neither praise nor approve the doctrine or life of heathens or heretics, yet these speak well of them. I do not think the Romanists the more catholic for this, that they speak well of none but of themselves, and will allow salvation to none but those of their own communion. I could name a certain lord of this kingdom, who was upon his death-bed urged to declare himself of the Church of Rome, from this argument of Bellarmine, *viz.* "that they of the Church of Rome denounced damnation to all out of her communion;" whereas we Protestants allowed salvation as possible

to some of them. But he answered the priest that urged this, “ that he thought it safest to die in the communion of that Church that was most charitable.” A man would think that charity, which is an inseparable note of a Christian, and made so by our blessed Saviour, John xiii. 35, might have been allowed to have been a mark of the true Church also.

That they do not commend heathens, the Cardinal affirms roundly, and yet it were no hard matter to prove that many Catholics have done it, and that they might very well do it. For why may not heathens be commended for their justice, their fortitude, their temperance, gratitude, &c.

He tells us likewise the same of heretics, that the Catholics neither commend their life or doctrine. Indeed they have little reason to expect it from them, who are resolved to speak well of none but those of their own party and way. And yet because the Cardinal lays so great a stress upon the “ confession of adversaries,” and condescends to receive the testimony of heretics (as he is pleased to call us) when it makes for his purpose, I shall at least produce on our own behalf as many confessions from those he calls Catholics, as he hath produced of ours on the behalf of his Church, and those also both with respect to our lives and doctrines.

And though it be true, that they of the Church of Rome have blackened Luther, and the other first Reformers, as men of flagitious lives ; yet there will be found among them some who have given a better account of them.

I might give in a very fair account of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, from a contemporary of their own Church, who knew them well, and conversed with them before they died. For Martin Luther, whatever the Romanists say of him now, yet certain it is, that Erasmus, who I hope will pass with Cardinal Bellarmine for a Catholic, who lived in his time, gives a better account of him. In his letter to the Cardinal of York, speaking of Luther, he says,* “ *Hominis vita magno omnium consensu probatur ; jam id non leve præjudicium est, tantam esse morum integritatem, ut nec hostes reperiant, quod calumnientur* : his life was then approved by all men, and so entire were his manners, that his enemies could find nothing to reproach him with.” Again, in a letter to Ph. Melanethon ;†

* Erasm. Ep. 1. 11. Ep. 1. [Ep. 317. vol. 3. p. 322. Lugd. Bat. 1703.]

† Ep. 1. 5. Ep. 38. [Ep. 411. Ibid. p. 431.]

“*Martini Lutheri vitam apud nos nemo non probat*; i. e. all men among us,” says he, “approve the life of Martin Luther.” The same Erasmus says of Ecolampadius,* “that he meditated of nothing but of heavenly things.” Maldonat the Jesuit,† an allowed Catholic, and fierce enemy to the Calvinists, says of them, “that there appeared nothing in their actions, but alms, temperance, and modesty.”

But their doctrine is of greatest concernment in this present question. Let us see if any of our adversaries of the Church of Rome have made any concession in favour of our doctrine. And here I will not enlarge; it will be enough to produce a few more testimonies, and those more pertinent than what the Cardinal hath produced on the other side.

The doctrine which our first Reformers preached, was not so absurd as it is by some represented: many of the Church of Rome have spoken much in favour of our doctrines. Erasmus did so of many of those doctrines which Luther taught; “The things,” says he,‡ “which Luther urgeth, if they were moderately handled, in my opinion, come nearer to the evangelical vigour.” And speaking of the Eucharist, he adds, “that were he not moved by so great a consent of the Church, he could embrace the opinion of Ecolampadius:”—he adds, “that he found no place in the Holy Scriptures where the Apostles are said to have consecrated bread and wine into the flesh and blood of the Lord.” The same Erasmus elsewhere does profess, “that he wished that what Luther writes of the tyranny, covetousness, and filthiness of the court of Rome, had been false.”

Cardinal Mattheo Langi, archbishop of Saltzburg,§ told every one, “that the reformation of the mass was honest, the liberty of meats convenient, and a just demand to be discharged of so many commandments of men; but that a poor monk should reform all was intolerable.” The doctrine was not so obnoxious as to offend the most moderate and considering men of the Roman Church; many of them have upon occasion frankly declared on our side.

It hath been proved, that St. Gregory the Great was no friend to private masses or transubstantiation; and it is well

* Ep. 1. 7. Ep. 43. [Ep. 354. Ibid. p. 367.]

† Maldonat. in Matth. vii. 15.

‡ Epist. 1. 22. Ep. 10. ibid. [Ut supra, Ep. 703, 1092. p. 817, 1265.]

§ Hist. Coun. Trent. l. 1. [p. 52. Lond. 1776.]

known that he renounced the title of Universal Bishop, which is now claimed by the Popes of Rome. A learned writer of our Church,* hath long ago produced many witnesses of the Church of Rome, that have borne testimony to the doctrine of Protestants. *E.g.* "The doctrine of purgatory was not for a long time universally believed in the Church," says Polydore Virgil. Some, before Luther, taught "that Papal indulgences were but a kind of godly cheat," says Gregory de Valentia. "The worship of images was condemned by almost all the Fathers," says the same Polydore Virgil. "The authority of a Council is superior to that of the Pope," say the Councils of Constance and Basil. "Marriage of priests is not prohibited by legal or evangelical authority, but by ecclesiastical," says Gratian. Venerable Bede owns two sacraments on which the Church is founded. For many other things disputed between us and them, we appeal to the learned and moderate men amongst them, and doubt not to defend our doctrines by confessions of those of their own Church. Such are they of the number of sacraments, the primacy of the bishop of Rome, &c. We make no doubt but to produce many Catholic authors speaking on our side.

For communion in both kinds, we have the testimony of the Councils of Constance and Trent, that it was the ancient practice.

For the doctrine of transubstantiation, one of the communion of the Church of Rome† hath given us an account lately; he proves from many doctors of the Church of Rome, that it is not ancient, *viz.* from Peter Lombard, from Suarez, Scotus, the Bishop of Cambray, Cardinal Cusanus, Erasmus, Alphonsus à Castro, Tonstall, and Cassander. And that it is not taught in the Holy Scriptures, he proves from the testimonies of Scotus, Ockam, Gabriel Biel, and Cardinal Cajetan; and after all, that it was not the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church.

It would have been very fit I should here have made an end, having considered everything which the Cardinal hath offered as to this note of the Church. But there is a late writer (I will not call him author‡) hath taken the confidence to produce the testimony of the Jewish writers in behalf of the

* See Bishop Morton's Appeal, 1. 1.

† See a Treatise of Transubstantiation, by one in the Communion of the Church of Rome, printed 1687.

‡ Mr. Sclater's Consens. Vet.

Church of Rome; and which is most surprising of all, he quotes the Rabbins in defence of the doctrine of transubstantiation, which they are as far from asserting as he is from understanding them. The Cardinal was too learned and modest to attempt any thing of this nature; but this gentleman advanceth higher than he thought fit to do: what he offers speaks nothing so loudly as the writer's effrontery and ignorance, not to say something worse. Though he thought fit to desert his mother the Church of England, yet it little became him to fly in her face, and suborn a route of Jews against her. His discourse is so weak, that I shall bestow very little time and pains about it; I shall however say something to it, that he may not think any part of his pamphlet unanswered, and do heartily wish him repentance for his folly, and that he may learn modesty for the future.

And for my better proceeding in this matter, I shall do these things:—

First, I will briefly shew the true use and value of the testimony of Jews, as to the Christian religion.

Secondly, I shall shew the gross ignorance (not to say dishonesty) of this writer in this matter.

Thirdly, I shall prove that the Jewish writers are so far from serving the Church of Rome, that they bear witness against it, and that also in this very matter of transubstantiation.

First, I shall consider how far the testimony of the Jews is useful to Christianity. And several such there are that serve the common Christianity.

1. The Jews, as to matter of fact, confess that there was such a man as Jesus; that he wrought wonderful works. They do in their Talmud, and elsewhere, mention several of those names which are mentioned in the New Testament, and are there mentioned to have been at the same time in which they are placed there. This is an useful testimony, and serves the common Christianity, and saves us the labour in our books against the Jews, of proving these matters of fact.

2. They are also good witnesses as to the number of the canonical books of the Old Testament, which were deposited in their hands. This is owned by Cajetan,* who affirms, that this is one advantage we receive from the obstinacy of the

* Cajetan. in Rom. xi. v. 11.

Jews, that though they believe not in Christ themselves, yet they approve the books of the Old Testament, and therefore those books cannot be supposed to have been invented by the Christians, to have served their turn. This testimony of theirs serves indeed the common Christianity, but is so far from serving the Church of Rome, that it is a good evidence against the Council of Trent, who have received those books for canonical, which the Jews never received into the canon of Scripture.

3. They are good witnesses of the "promise of a Messias," which is reckoned among the fundamental articles of the Jewish faith. And this is another advantage that Christians receive (as Cajetan* well observes in the place mentioned before) from the obstinacy of the Jews. They agree that such a promise was made, and that therefore it cannot be supposed either a forgery of the Christians, or a vain belief peculiar only to them.

4. They are good witnesses where they interpret those texts of the Old Testament of the Messias, which belong to that matter, and which are by the writers of the New Testament applied to that purpose: and the more ancient Jews do thus. The Chaldee paraphrasts, and other of the more ancient Jewish doctors, do apply those texts to him, which the Christians also understand to be spoken of him: of which, were it not too great a digression, it would be easy to produce very many proofs. This serves the common Christianity greatly, and in our disputes against the Jews, affords us very great advantages.

5. Nor do I deny but that some of the catholic doctrines of the Christian religion (I mean such as have been always believed from the first beginning of Christianity) may receive some confirmation from the writings of the most ancient Jewish doctors. But to produce them as witnesses, as this writer does, to a doctrine never received by the ancient Church, is the most extravagant thing imaginable.

Secondly, I shall shew the gross ignorance (not to say dishonesty) of this writer in this matter.

His author, from whom he borrows all his Rabbinical learning, is Galatinus: he tells (if we will believe him) that "he was always accounted a very learned man :"† it would have been more to his purpose to have vouched for his honesty. After

* Abravanel. C. Fidei, c. 1.

† Preface to Consens. Veterum.

this he falls into a fit of devotion; he is of a sudden transported with admiration, that the “ Hebrew writers, long before Christ’s time” (take Mr. Sclater’s word for that), “ should have such notions ; but the wind bloweth where it listeth,” &c. He might have staid till he had been sure of the matter of fact, and then it would have been time enough to admire at it. But the reader is to know, that Mr Sclater was mightily inclined to believe in this matter with the Church of Rome, or else Galatinus could never by his arguments have prevailed upon him. This appears from his own words, p. 27, after he had drawn up his evidence from Galatinus ; he tells his reader, that “ Galatinus thought” (and I will assure you it is hard to say what a Jew that professeth himself a convert to the Church of Rome, does really think) “ these prophecies and interpretations” (he might have called them dreams and figments) “ argumentative, not only against the Jews, but a confirmation also of the Christian religion against all heretics,” &c. But if you ask Mr. Sclater what confirms him in this belief, you will find him not hard to believe : “ I am confirmed,” says he, “ by the title-page of his book.” Of so great force is the title-page of Galatinus his book with Mr. Sclater of Putney.

This Galatinus was born a Jew, he was afterwards a convert to the Church of Rome, and a friar : and pretends to discover something in the Hebrew doctors to justify the doctrines of the Roman Church, to which he had betaken himself. It is certain that learned men have represented him as a man of no sincerity, and have taken notice of his falsity, and the forgeries of his book. Johannes Mercerus,* a man of singular learning, and Scaliger,† a great judge, give this account of him. And so also many others, and some of the more learned men of the Church of Rome have done. Sixtus Senensis‡ repreahends him for belying Pope Clement V. Joseph de Voisin,§ a priest of the Church of Rome, taxeth him of ignorance of the doctrine of the Jews. The best character I find of him is, that he was a plagiary or thief; he stole what is good out of the *Pugio Fidei* of Raimundus.|| For other things in his book, they are figments and forgeries, trifles and ridiculous things. His testimonies out of Gale Razieah and Zohar,

* J. Mercer. in Job ii. 11. [p. 17. Lugd. Bat. 1651.]

† Scalig. Epist. ad Casaubon. [Ep. 84. p. 239. Lugd. Bat. 1627.]

‡ Biblioth. St. 1. 2. [p. 125. Colon. 1586.]

§ J. Voisin Theolog. Judaorum, p. 237. [Par. 1647.]

|| Jac. Maussaci Prolegom. in Pug. Fid.

are of no credit. Jac. Mausaeus, the above-named Jos. de Voisin,* authors against whom Mr. Sclater cannot except, will give the reader this account of him. In a word, he was a converted Jew (and what kind of men they have proved, I need not tell, nor can I think of that matter without sorrow); he is one that Cardinal Bellarmine thought not fit to quote in behalf of their Church; one that is condemned and stigmatized by the learned men of the Church of Rome. But yet this author hath so great force with Mr. Sclater of Putney, that he is confirmed by the very title-page of his book.

I should be vain, if after this I should be operose in examining the testimonies produced; and yet I cannot but reflect a little farther upon the stupid ignorance or insincerity of this writer. He quotes R. Solomon† for the proof of transubstantiation. All that R. Solomon says to his purpose is, that the LXXII. Psalm is wholly meant of the Messias, and that many of their Rabbins interpret that which we render “handful of corn,”‡ of certain sweet-meats or dainties in the days of Messias. It is very well known, that the Jews fondly expect great feasting in the days of the Messias; and no wonder that many of the Rabbins should interpret these words of those dainties. After all this, R. Solomon gives another interpretation of the place;§ but what is all this to transubstantiation? But be all this as it will; with what face can he affirm that he produces several Jewish masters, when he produces not one?|| And yet he confidently attempts to name them, though he bewray his great ignorance in it. He says he produceth the book Siphre, R. Ira, Midras, Coheleth: where he reckons Midras Cōheleth, which is but the title of one book (*viz.* a Commentary of Ecclesiastes), for two Rabbins. This I dare say is Mr. Sclater’s own, he could not borrow it from the learned Galatinus. Mr. Sclater adds that he says, that by the tops of the mountains (in that Psalm) nothing can be more rightly designed, than the prelates and priests of the Church, in “whom this Scripture is then fulfilled and verified, when the body of Christ is elevated.” Now there is not one syllable in R. Solomon of Siphre, R. Ira, Midras Coheleth; not a word of the priests and prelates; all this is Mr. Sclater’s.

* J. de Voisin. observat. in Proœm.

† R. Sol. in 72. 16.

‡ פָּסַת בְּרֵגְלֹמְקָאָוָת a modern word, probably from the Greek word γλυκύς.

§ V. Buxtorf. Synagog. Jud. 1. 36.

|| Consens. Vet. p. 21.

Galatinus himself affirms no such thing of R. Solomon ;* and therefore if by "he produces," Mr. Sclater mean R. Solomon, as any reader will be apt to think, he wrongs him, for in truth he quotes none of those authors, though Galatinus do.

For his first quotation out of R. Moses Haddurshan, or, the Preacher, if we should allow it to be truly cited, yet any indifferent reader will find it nothing to the purpose. For what follows is too transparent to gain belief; besides that, a learned society of Hebricians were many years ago consulted about a quotation of Galatinus, out of that R. Moses, † who gave it under their hands, that they found in the place quoted "nothing to the purpose."

For his citation out of Mechilta, p. 22, though there be nothing in it to the purpose, yet if there had, he ought to have referred to the page or leaf of that book, if he had done sincerely.

For R. Cahanah, p. 23, who he says was born before Christ, we have so little evidence of that, that it does not appear that there was ever any such writer.

And for R. Johai, p. 24, there is no such anthon found, nor mentioned by any but Galatinus.

For the fable of Elias, p. 24, his being present at the circumcision, it is a Jewish dream; the use he makes of it is ridiculous, and the testimony of R. Judas a mere figment.

For the Gale Razia, cited by him, and what he cites from from Rabbenu Hak-kodesh, p. 25 (by whom he should mean the compiler of the Jewish Misna), they are mere counterfeits. And Mr. Sclater is something unlucky, for he in his book instead of Gale hath Gate, and in his errata he hath it Gaize.

III. I shall prove that the Jewish writers are so far from serving the Church of Rome, by their confession, that they bear witness against it, and that also in the very business of transubstantiation.

And here it were easy to enlarge, and to bring abundant proofs from authors known and easy to be procured, and from such as have the greatest reputation among the Jews.

The ancient Jews are on our side, as to the number of canonical books of the Old Testament. I could easily prove both from Josephus and Philo the Jew,‡ that they are against that distribution of the precepts of the Decalogue which obtains

* Pag. 21. l. 37.

† Dr. Morton's Catholic Appeal, p. 394.

‡ Joseph. Antiq. Jud. l. iii. c. 4. [c. 5. vol. 1. p. 129, Amstel. 1726.]
Philo Jud. de Decalogo.

in the Church of Rome, and with us do reckon the commandment against images to be a distinct precept, and the second in number.

The doctrine and practice of praying to saints, and worshipping of images, the Jews except against;* the latter of which is against the very letter of their law.

The doctrine of purgatory,† the practice among Christians of crossing themselves when it thunders; the christening of bells;‡ the doctrine of the necessity of the celibacy of priests, the vowed celibacy of monks and nuns,§ as well as of receiving of apocryphal books into the canon of Scripture, and other opinions and practices in the Christian Church.

And for the doctrine of transubstantiation, as it is against the common sense of mankind, and destroys the certainty of every thing else; so the Jews, upon all occasions, object against it. We have a witness beyond exception, even of the Roman Church,|| who brings in the Jews objecting against this doctrine, and representing the unreasonableness and absurdity of it from fourteen several heads of argument, which I may not here represent to the reader, because it would be too great a digression. Nor do I find this learned author (who writes in defence of the Roman Church, and attempts to answer these objections), alleging that this was the doctrine which was taught by the Hebrew doctors. The Jews have so far abhorred this doctrine, and so far detested Christians upon this account, that they were wont, when they made use of Christian nurses, to force them to throw away their milk for three days together, before they gave suck, when it happened that at Easter these nurses had received the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This Pope Gregory¶ complains of, and decrees upon it, that Christians should not for the future be servants to the Jews. And Josephus Albo** disputes against this doctrine of transubstantiation very vigorously; and so do many others,†† in their books against Christians. And many

* Nizach. Vet. p. 128. [Wagens. Tela Ignea Satanæ, Altdorf. Noric. 1681.] R. Isaac. [Ibid.] p. 383. Lipman. p. 16. [Norib. 1644.]

† Lipman's Nizachon. [Ibid.] p. 25.

‡ Nizach. Vet. [ut supra] p. 23, 42, 43, 196.

§ R. Isaac. Chizuk Emuna, [ut supra] p. 345.

|| Fortalitium Fidei. Ludg. Anno 1525. [fol. cxxx. &c. Nurimb. 1494.]

¶ Decret. Gregor. l. v. Tit. vi. cap. 13. Accepimus autem, &c. [vol. 2. p. 1663. Lugd. 1671.]

** Jos. Albo Ikkarim.

†† V. Nizach. vet. [ut supra] p. 255. Lipman. Nizachon, [ut supra] p. 11.

more testimonies might be produced, were not most of their books printed in Italy, where it is not safe for them to be too plain. And learned men do very well know, that the passage in Josephus Albo against this doctrine of the Roman Church, hath been expunged in one edition of that author. It is very well known, that all the later Jews are against this doctrine ; and that Trypho the Jew, and the most ancient writers, have not objected it against Christians, is only an argument that this doctrine was not so old as that time in which they lived. This doctrine the Jews are certain cannot be true, because if they are not certain of the falsity of this, they have no certainty of their own religion, nor can ever be convinced of the truth of ours. The truth is, this is one great occasion of hardening them against Christianity ; and we are never like to see them come into the Christian Church, till this doctrine of transubstantiation, and the worship of images, be removed out of it. But then the practice annexed to the doctrine of transubstantiation, of worshipping a creature, is so dangerous, that even they who own the doctrine, confess, if that be not true, they cannot be excused from idolatry.

God give us a just sense of these things, that we may not hereafter have, besides our own sins, which will be load great enough, the obstinacy of the Jews in great measure to answer for.

THE
FOURTEENTH NOTE OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED,
VIZ.
THE UNHAPPY END OF THE CHURCH'S ENEMIES.

Decima quarta Nota est, Infelix Exitus, seu Finis eorum qui Ecclesiam oppugnant.—Bellar. Lib. iv. cap. xvii. de Notis Ecclesie.

IF he be an unwise builder, who pulls down what he intends to build up ; then Cardinal Bellarmine (though one of the master-builders of the Church of Rome) deserves not to be reckoned one of the wisest : for he must shut his eyes close, who does not plainly see that he frequently defeats his own design ; by giving notes, which conclude that Church to be false, which he designed to prove was the only true one. Such, for instance, is that which is now to be considered, as shall in the sequel of this discourse be made appear.

The confutation of which cannot be difficult, since I find nothing in this whole chapter, that hath so much as the show of an argument. Whereas some of his notes are guarded with a pretence, at least, of Scripture, reason, and antiquity ; this is exposed naked to the assaults of its adversaries, without so much as a paper-shield to protect it. He tells us indeed many tragical stories of unhappy deaths, some of which are true, some doubtful, and others false ; some of persons who were deadly enemies, other of persons who were zealous defenders of the true Church : but had the stories been all certainly true, and had the persons who thus died, been all of them implacable enemies of the Church of Rome ; yet what does it signify, unless he also had proved, that when a person dies an unnatural death, the meaning of it is, that that Church, of which he professed himself a member, is false ; and the Church he opposed the only true one ? But how unwise soever he was in the choice of his note, he was so wise, as not to attempt the proof of this, unless the citation of this

Scripture may pass for a proof: "Praise his people, O ye nations; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his enemies," Deut. xxxii. 43. God will avenge the blood of his servants: therefore if a Protestant die an unhappy death, the Church of Rome is the only true Church.

But why did the Cardinal send out this note so forlorn? For a good reason: because no defence could be found for it. But why did he then bring it into the field? Because he knew it was popular, and might serve the cause better than another, that was never so well fenced. For will not he dread to oppose the Church of Rome, who is persuaded that God will set a note of vengeance upon those that do so? Will not he steadfastly adhere to it, who believes that that is a certain way to a happy death? In short, whosoever can be persuaded to believe, that the Church of Rome is by this note distinguished from all other Churches, he will as much dread to turn Protestant as he does to die the most prodigious sort of death.

But the mischief is, that however serviceable this pretended note may be to them among weak and undiscerning persons, it will do them as much disservice among those who are judicious and able to examine it: for when they shall once see what a palpable cheat it is, and in case that it were a note of the true Church that the Church of Rome hath the least reason of any Church in the world to pretend to it, they will be thereby disposed to break off from the communion of that Church, which contradicts its own marks, and betake themselves to some other Church, which hath a better title to them. For the effecting of which, I shall proceed in this method:

I. I shall premise some things as preparatory to what follows.

II. Shew, that this can be no note of the true Church.

III. That in case it were, the Protestant Church would be the true Church, rather than the Church of Rome.

I. I shall premise these five things as preparatory to what follows.

1. That by an unhappy end, Bellarmine means, that which is so in outward appearance, to the eye of sense, or according to the judgment of the world. Such as a violent, or sudden,

or infamous, or any kind of strange or unusual death; especially such in which there is an appearance of the Divine vengeance. As to be devoured by dogs, or eaten up of vermin, to be flayed or burnt alive; for a man to kill himself, or to be killed by his servants; to be smitten by a thunderbolt, &c. In a word, any such end, as either in its nature, or in its circumstances, is not the usual or common end of men.

2. Bellarmine meant this, not barely for the note of a Church, but of that which is the only true Church. For since, besides the common faith, in which all Christians agree, there are many points in which they differ, and by which they are divided among themselves into several parties, he supposing that no more than one of these can be a true Church, and therefore that that one must be the only true Church, his work was to furnish us with such notes, by which this one Church might be known and distinguished from all the rest. And therefore,

3. The instances he produces of unhappy deaths, are, for the greater part, impertinent, because the persons were such as were enemies, not to this or that Christian Church as distinguished from another, but to Christianity itself, and endeavoured the total extirpation of it out of the world. So did the Emperors Nero, Domitian, Diocletian, the Apostate Julian, &c. And those heretics, Simon Magus, Manichæus, &c. were not more opposite to the Church of Rome, than to any other Christian Church. There is nothing therefore in these instances, by which one Christian Church may be distinguished from another; nothing by which the Church of Rome may be marked out for the true Church, rather than the Church of Antioch or Alexandria.

And as those direful deaths of the heathen persecutors, and apostate Christians, gave no peculiar advantage to the Church of Rome then; so they make much against the Church of Rome now; for if they signified (as Bellarmine would have them) that Church to be the true Church, which was then opposed by them, it plainly follows, that the Church of Rome now is not a true Church, and that the Church of England is; because the Church of Rome now is not the same Church it was then: it hath now another faith, by which it is become another Church; whereas the Church of England is the same now it was at first, yea, the same now that the Church of Rome was then; it having purged itself from those corruptions, which have been since introduced by the Church of

Rome, and reduced itself to the primitive faith. Those other examples of tragical deaths, which if they had been true would have been more to the purpose, shall be anon considered.

4. Observe, that the unhappy end of those who defend it must be a note of a false Church, if the unhappy end of those who oppose it, be a note of the true. The reason is plain; because those who defend it, in doing so, they must oppose that Church that opposes it, if they therefore have an unhappy end, the opposite Church will have this note of the only true Church, and by consequence that Church they defend in opposition to it must be a false Church.

5. Observe, that from God's judgments against particular persons, nothing can be concluded against that Church of which they are members. The reason is manifest, because God's judgments upon particular persons are usually inflicted for particular personal crimes, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Ananias and Sapphira. These things being premised, I proceed to shew,

II. That this can be no note of the true Church; which I might prove at large, by shewing that it is destitute of all those conditions which Cardinal Perron,* and Bellarmine himself,† make necessary to every true note. But because this method hath been already observed in the examination of some of the foregoing marks, I shall therefore wave the advantages it would afford me; nor do I indeed stand in need of them, because the vanity and falsity of it will be otherwise sufficiently manifest, both by Scripture, experience, and reason.

First, By Scripture. And,

1. By all those Scriptures which declare, that "all things come alike to all men :" that in the common course of Providence, there is no difference put between the righteous and the wicked, between "him that sacrificeth, and him that sacrificeth not," Eccles. ix. 1, 2, 3. And by a plain parity of reason, he that persecutes the true religion, and he that defends it; he that worships God aright, and he that worships Him amiss, or not at all, as to outward events, hath frequently the same lot: as king Josiah, the restorer and maintainer of the true religion, and who served the Lord with all his heart, died the same unnatural death that Ahab did, who served

* Reply to K. James, l. i. c. 5. [p. 26, &c. Dovay, 1630.]

† De Not. Eccles. c. 2. [vol. 2. p. 96, &c. Prag. 1721.]

Baal, and provoked the Lord to anger more than all the kings of Israel that were before him. Nor was this promiscuous dispensation of events taken notice of only by wise Solomon, but we find it long before affirmed by Job, that "God destroyeth the perfect and the wicked," Job ix. 22. Righteous Abel, the first man that ever died, was a proof of it; he whose sacrifice was by God accepted, fell himself a sacrifice to his wicked brother's envy.

Nor was it thus, only before the law, and under the law, but it continues so still now under the Gospel. The tares and the wheat, though sown by different hands, the one by the Son of man, the other by the devil, yet as they grow up together in the same field, so they are gathered and cut down by the same reapers, by the same sickle, and are not severed, the one for the fire, and the other for the barn, till the end of the world.

Yea, in plain contradiction to this note, the Scripture tells us, "that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous," Eccles. viii. 14. And that not only in the course of their lives, but when they die too. For "there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness," Eccles. vii. 15. The good man is sometimes cut off by an early death, because he is better than others; and the wicked, whose sins cry aloud for vengeance, prolongs his days in his wickedness; and after a long and prosperous life, hath an honourable death and burial; for "I saw," saith Solomon, "the wicked buried," Eccles. viii. 10. that is, as Cardinal Cajetan expounds the words, in such a pompous sepulchre, as transmits an honourable memory of them to posterity.

I grant, that the notes of Divine vengeance are in some men's deaths fairly legible. But then as I have before observed, from God's judgments against this or that person, nothing can be concluded against that Church of which they are members.

2. Besides these general declarations, the Scripture further assures us, by a particular instance, that a true Church may be without this mark, and that the enemies of the true Church may have it. Thus the Church of Israel was without it, and the uncircumcised Philistines had it, when the high-priest fell backward and brake his neck, and his two sons Hophni and

Phineas, with thirty thousand of the Israelites, fell in one day by the sword of the Philistines, 1 Sam. iv. Again, when Zedekiah, the defender of the true Church, was taken, his nobles slaughtered, his sons slain before his eyes, his eyes then put out, and he carried captive to Babylon, and put in prison till the day of his death: if this was then a note of the Church, the Babylonians were the only true Church of God, for their enemies had then the most unhappy ends: so contrary is this note to what we find in Scripture.

Secondly, Nor is it less repugnant to daily observation, and the history of foregoing ages: for,

1. All the world can testify, that the same kind of death happens to men of different, yea, of opposite Churches. That as dies the Christian, so dies the Jew; as dies the Catholic, so dies the heretic: that the Protestant and the Papist "lie down alike in the dust," to use Job's phrase, Job. xxi. 26: that as they often agree in their deaths, who while they lived were of different Churches; so they often widely differ, who were united in the same. One hath a natural, another a violent death; one falls by the hand of God, another by the hand of his neighbour; one goes off gently in a calm, another is hurried away in a storm; one lives out the term of nature, another is cut off in the midst of his days; one dies leisurely, another is snatched away suddenly; one finds a grave in the earth, another in the sea, another finds none at all, but is exposed as a prey to beasts and birds. This is so obvious, that it is needless to produce instances for the confirmation of it.

2. Whosoever has any acquaintance with the history of the Christian Church, knows, that for several of the first ages, at least, the best men had generally the worst deaths: that the Apostles of our blessed Lord were set forth as a spectacle to the world, suffered the deaths of the basest malefactors; that St. Peter and St. Andrew were crucified, St. James the Just stoned and his brains knocked out with a club, St. Bartholomew flayed alive: that not one of the Apostles can be named, who did not end his life by an unnatural death, except only St. John, who escaped it by a miracle, for he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil.

That the first bishops (their successors) followed them in the like tragical deaths: that St. Clemens, bishop of Rome, was thrown into the bottom of the sea; St. Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, crucified; St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, exposed

to the lions ; St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, burnt at a stake : yea, that the Christians, for the most part, for three hundred years together, met with the most horrid deaths : one was torn in pieces by wild beasts, another was roasted on a spit, another was broiled on a gridiron, another had his flesh scraped off to the bones with sharp shells, and salt and vinegar poured into his green wounds ; and for one of their bloody persecutors an hundred Christians may be found who died a terrible death. These were the happy ends that the first and best Christians were blessed with : happy indeed, if we respect the cause for which they died, and the blessed reward they were crowned with ; but none ever more unhappy in the eye of the world. As they had been of all men the most miserable, had they had hope in this life only ; so, if this note be true, their hope could not have reached beyond it.

3. Nor is this note more repugnant to Scripture and experience than it is to reason. One prime fundamental principle of reason is, that contradictions cannot be true, or that the same thing cannot be and not be. This we are as sure of as that we ourselves are, or that any thing else is ; whatsoever therefore it be from whence it plainly follows that contradictions may be true, we are as sure that it is false ; and therefore that the note now under consideration is so, because, if it be true, the most palpable contradictions will be true also. Of those many that offer themselves I shall mention a few. As,

1. That that was a false Church which was most certainly the true Church. For if the burning alive of Valens, the Arian emperor, was a certain sign that the Arian faith is false, the burning alive of many of the first Christians is as certain a note that the primitive faith is false. If it follows that Manichæus was a damnable heretic, because he was flayed alive, must we not conclude that St. Bartholomew was as bad (and by consequence all the holy Apostles), because he suffered the same kind of death ?

2. That a Church remaining the same, without any change in doctrine, worship, or discipline, may be to-day a false Church, to-morrow the only true Church. So the Church of Israel was a false one, when the high-priest fell backward and brake his neck : within a few days after, when the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines, and they were smitten with a foul disease, of which they miserably died, it was a true Church again. Thus the Church of Rome, in the year 1656, when a dreadful pestilence (for that is one of Bellarmine's unhappy

ends) swept away three hundred thousand in three months' time in the kingdom of Naples, and made great havoc at Rome and Genoa,* was a false Church; but in the year 1665, when the like dreadful pestilence raged in London, it became a true Church again. Yea,

3. That there is no one Church in the world, but by this note it may be, and it may not be the true Church; because the opposers and the defenders of any one and the same Church may have both of them unhappy, and both of them happy ends. Now as the opposers have unhappy ends, it is a true Church; as the defenders have unhappy ends, it is (by the fourth thing premised) a false one. Again, as the opposers have an happy end, it is a false Church; as the defenders have an happy end, it is a true one. Thus, for example, the Church of England is both a true Church and a false: Queen Elizabeth lived and died happily; the Spaniards, her and its greatest enemies in 1588, died unfortunately; therefore it is the only true Church. King Charles I. (of blessed memory) had an unhappy end, the usurper died quietly in his bed; therefore it is a false Church. I bring the Church of England only for an instance, the same is as true of the Church of Rome; and I doubt not of any other division of Christians of what denomination soever.

And is not this now a fine note to find out the true Church by? when no false Church can be found, that will not by it be the only true one; and on the contrary, no true Church can be mentioned that will not be a false one. Yea, which is more, when that which is indeed the only true Church (the Church catholic), will by this note be no Church; for not only its enemies, but its friends, too often die unfortunately; and its enemies, as well as its friends, have frequently such deaths, as in the eye of the world are most happy.

4. Whereas it is a contradiction to say, that the only true Church can be more than one, if this note stand good, it will be many; so many different Churches as there are in the world, so many true Churches will there be, one only excepted. So when a Pope dies miserably (as all the world knows the Popes have frequently done), then every Church in the world, the Roman only excepted, is the only true Church; because the Pope is an adversary to every one of them; and this (as

* Athanas. Kircheri Scrutin. Physico-Med. Contag. Luis quæ dicitur Pestis. p. 426.

appeared by the third thing premised), is made by Bellarmine the note of the only true Church. Yea,

5. Those very Protestant Churches which Bellarmine designed to mark out for false will by this note be true Churches, and that which he would conclude the only true Church will be a false one.

1. The Lutherans and Calvinists, he says, are not true Churches, because Luther and Calvin died miserably. That they so died, I shall presently shew is false. But be it true, what follows? If Luther died miserably, then the Calvinists are the true Church: if Calvin died miserably, then the Lutherans are the true Church; for Luther and Calvin opposed each other, as well as both of them the Church of Rome.

2. That the Church of Rome, that he would make to be the only true Church, will by this note be concluded a false one, I shall shew in speaking to the next head, and therefore now pass it. I think by this time, not only the vanity but the falsehood of this note is sufficiently manifest.

III. Let us now suppose it a note of the true Church, and see who will have the best of it. The advantage will lie so clearly on the Protestant side, that the Romanists themselves will be forced to confess it.

I grant, that those horrid deaths, which have by the Church of Rome been inflicted upon those who have opposed her errors, are a mark by which she is made as visible as her city seated upon the seven hills; those who have thus died, are more than can be numbered, and their deaths were, many of them, both for nature and circumstances, the most monstrous: but this, I trow, does not mark her out for the spouse of Christ, but for that "woman that is drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:" she is not, therefore, I think, ambitious of this mark, but would rather hide it, though it is so deeply branded upon her, that she will never be able to rub it out. If therefore these be set aside, which I am confident the Church of Rome is very willing they should be, and would be glad if all histories were burnt too, in which their burnings are left on record; let us see whether Church, the Roman or the Protestant, hath the fairest plea to this note. This will be soon determined, by comparing the deaths of their prime members and zealous champions, and then considering on which side we find the greater number of such as are unnatural, and not common to men.

1. For the Protestants. The chief assertors of the Protestant interest, are either their bishops and other eminent pastors and teachers; or those secular princes, who have, under God, been the great defenders and protectors of the Protestant faith.

As for their bishops, and other eminent pastors and teachers, they are without number who have died the most happy deaths, such as Jewel, Whitaker, Usher, Hall, Morton, Jackson, Melancthon, Bucer, Museulus, Zanchy, Farellus, Beza, Ursinus, Gryneus, &c. whose deaths were not only placid and pious, but attended with those lively hopes of a blessed immortality, as recommended their religion to its adversaries.

But it is not so much my business to tell you whose deaths were happy, as out of that number to select those that were unhappy. And I think we may take it for granted, that the number of these is very small, in that their professed adversary, who laboured to make the most of every thing against them, hath mentioned no more than five, *viz.* Luther, Zuinglius, Ecolampadius, Carolostadius, and Calvin. Now suppose it true, that all these died as miserably as Bellarmine would have the world believe; yet what are five to that numberless number, who have had the most auspicious deaths? Will not the argument for the truth of their Church from those that died happily, as much exceed that against it, from those that died miserably, as the number of the one exceeds that of the other? So that if the true Church be concluded by this argument, it is ten thousand to one, but the Protestant Church is the only true Church.

But what shall we say, if the deaths of all but one of these five be misrepresented? and what he says of that one, and two of the other, if it were true, be no argument of an unhappy death? Whether it be so or no, I shall now briefly examine.

He begins with Luther. "He," says the Cardinal, "died suddenly; for whereas in the evening he was merry and in health, and had provoked all that were present to laughter by his jests, the same night he was found dead."*

Grant this were true: a sudden death is not always, and to

* Lutherus morte repentina sublatus est; nam cum vesperi opiparam cænam sumpsisset letus et sannus, et facetiis suis omnes ad risum provocasset, eadem nocte mortuus est. Bellarm. [vol. 2. p. 131. col. 2. Prag. 1721.]

all persons, unhappy. But suppose it were, it ill becomes a Papist to object it; since it is no more than what hath been the lot of many of their Popes: for so died Pope Nicholas III.* and Pope Clement VI.,† as their own writers witness.

“But Luther had eat a lusty supper, and was merry and jocular the evening before.” And so had several of their Popes, the next evening before they died. Pope Paul II. after he had supped most jollily, and persuaded himself that he had many years to live, the same night died of an apoplexy.‡ Pope Leo X. led constantly a merry life, but his death happened in the highest excess of feasting, mirth and jollity; and so suddenly, that there was not time afforded for absolution and extreme unction.§ And if Luther jested the day before he died, methinks it might have passed without any severe censure, since Sir Thomas More, the Pope’s martyr, was so sportful upon the scaffold, and died with a jest in his mouth.

But what credit is to be given to his enemies, we may learn from those monstrous tales they spread concerning his death, not only after, but long before it: such as that horrible miracle wrought at his funeral for the conviction of heretics, which he confuted with his own hand. And it is not unpleasant to read how they contradict one another. One says, that he purged out his entrails, like Arius: another, that his mouth was distorted, and his whole right side turned to a duskish colour. But above all, commend me to Thyræus the Jesuit: he confidently tells us, that in a town of Brabant, named Cheol, there were many persons possessed with devils, who were brought thither to be cured by the intercessions and prayers of the saint of the place: that these poor creatures

* Ubi idem Pontifex cibi ac potus continentissimus, subita tamen morte correptus, &c. Plat. in Vit. Nic. III. [p. 238. col. 2. Colon. Agr. 1611.]

† Vergente hoc eodem anno Clemens, cum Apostolicum solium annos decem, menses septem tenuisset, præcipiti morbo ex humanis ereptus est. Raynald. ad Ann. 1352. n. 21. [vol. 6. p. 564. col. 2. Luc. 1750.]

‡ Et cum annos plurimos vivere sibi persuaderet, anno salutis nostræ 1471. v. Kal. Augsti, hora secunda noctis, cum eo die lætum consistorium habuisset, et jocundissime cœnasset, apoplexia correptus, vitam cum morte mutavit. Johan. Stell. Anno 1464. p. 262. [Basil. 1650.]

§ Ex hujus victoria nuncio Leonem Pontificem ingenti diffusum gaudio referunt, in quo apoplexia correptus, nullis perceptis Sacramentis, ætatis anno quadragesimo sexto nondum exacto, decessit inopina morte. Raynald. ad Ann. 1521. n. 108. [Ut supra, vol. 12. p. 357. col. 1.] — Die insequenti lætitiae pompam sua morte clausit, inopina quidem adeo, ut ne Sacramentis quidem munitus fuerit. N. 109. [Ibid. col. 2.]

were on a sudden delivered from these evil spirits, and that this was the very day that Luther died : that the day after the devils returned again into the same bodies, and being asked whither they were gone the day before ? answered, that by the commandment of their prince, they were called forth to attend the soul of their grand prophet and companion Luther. This fable, as ridiculous as it is malicious, is quoted at large, and credited by as considerable a man as Florimond de Raymond.* He, I say, that shall reflect upon these things, will not be apt to believe the reports of his adversaries.

If we take the account of his death from Sleidan, we shall find it very different, and such as was every way becoming a most pious and devout Christian.† But it will be said, that he was his friend, and therefore as little to be credited as his enemies.

Hear therefore what many learned men of the Church of Rome say, who cannot be suspected of any partiality in favour of him. "The Fathers in Trent," saith Father Paul, " and the court of Rome, conceived great hope, seeing that so potent an instrument, to contradict the doctrine and rites of the Church of Rome, was dead, &c. and the rather, because that death was divulged throughout Italy with many prodigious and fabulous circumstances, which were ascribed to miracle and the vengeance of God, though there were but the usual accidents, which do ordinarily happen in the deaths of men of sixty-three years of age."‡ So that in Father Paul's judgment, there was nothing in his death but what was common. Yea, that the very worst circumstances were no other than such accidents, which happen also many times to very good Christians, is acknowledged by a late adversary,§ who hath written a book on purpose to disparage him. Yea, that he died in great honour, as well as piously, another hath informed us. "After supper," says Thuanus, "immediately before the night in which he departed, when he was asked, whether in the eternal life we shall know one another ? he said, that we should, and confirmed it by testimonies of Scripture. As many strove who should best express their love to him while he lived, so neither by death could they be drawn from loving him. The citizens of Mansfield contended that he ought to be

* *De la Naissance de l'Heresie*, l. 3. c. 11. p. 332.

† *Jo. Sleid. Comment. l. 17.* [l. 16. p. 288, &c. Argentor. 1566.]

‡ *Hist. of the Counc. of Trent*, l. 2. p. 149.

§ *Spirit of Mart. Luther*, p. 104.

buried with them, because that was his native soil ; but the authority of Frederick, the Prince Elector, prevailed, that he should be carried to Wittenberg, and there honourably interred.”* And indeed the transcendent honour that was done to his memory, seems to be that which chiefly provoked his enemies, to set their inventions on work to defame him.

The Cardinal’s next instance of an unhappy end, is Zuinglius. And why is his death reckoned unhappy ? Because he was slain in a war against Catholics.† But is it a strange thing for a man to be killed in a war ? does every one that so ends his days, die miserably ? If so, how many millions hath the Pope brought to a miserable end, in sending them to the wars against the Saracens and heretics ? O, that they will say is a glorious death, that merits the brightest crown in heaven ! But Zuinglius was killed in a war against Catholics.

But stay, the Cardinal makes them Catholics too soon, he supposes them Catholics before Zuinglius was killed, whereas he was to prove them Catholics by his being killed ; for his unhappy death is the note now under debate, by which they were to be known to be of the true Church.

But that his death could be no argument that God disapproved the cause in which he died, is evident ; because, to the great grief of our adversaries, the Reformed religion, which they hoped would have died together with him, made a greater progress after his death, than it had done before. I shall speak but a word to the two next, because the Cardinal’s spite is chiefly against Calvin, who brings up the rear.

“ Oecolampadius,” says Bellarmine, “ in the evening went well to bed, and in the morning was, by his wife, found dead in his bed.”‡ For this also he quotes Cochlæus, though he says not “ that he went well to bed.” And so far is it from being true, that he had for a long time been ill, and for fifteen days before confined to his bed. But grant it true, I have said enough before in answer to it, in the vindication of Luther. I shall only add, that before the Cardinal had brought this for an

* Post cœnam proxime ante noctem qua decessit, cum rogaretur, num in illa sempiterna vita simus alter alterum agniti, ita esse aiebat, et Scripturæ testimonis confirmabat. Ut certatim eum vivum, &c. Thuan. Hist. l. 2.

† Zuinglius in bello contra Catholicos trucidatus est. Bellar. [vol. 2. p. 131. col. 2. Prag. 1721.]

‡ Oecolampadius cum vesperi sanus cubitum ivisset, mane inventus est ab uxore mortuus in lecto. Bellar. [Ibid.]

instance of an unhappy death in Protestants, he should have proved, that Papists are not as subject to apoplexies, or any other disease which causes a sudden stoppage of the circulation in the heart, as Protestants are.

For Carolostadius, "the minister of Basil," he tells us, "in an epistle they published concerning his death, write that he was killed by the devil."* He has not told us where this epistle is, and I despair of ever finding it. I shall therefore send the reader to Petrus Boquinus, a student at Basil when Carolostadius died, and attended his funeral, who hath given an account of his death, and exposed this impudent forgery; as I find him quoted by Melchior Adams.†

I am now come to the fifth and last act of this tragedy, which is so lewd a calumny, that any man but an advocate for their Church, might be ashamed to own it, *viz.* "John Calvin was eaten up of worms, as Antiochus, Herod, Maximinus, and Hunnericus were;" and not only so, but "invoking the devils, he died blaspheming and cursing."‡ But what authority hath the Cardinal for this? The testimony of Bolsec, a man of so prostituted a fame, and whose lies are so gross, that many popish writers, who have studied to blacken Calvin, have been ashamed to own him.

The charge is two-fold: 1. "That he was eaten up of worms." 2. "That invoking the devils, he died blaspheming and cursing;" both which are as false as any thing ever forged by the father of lies.

1. "That he was eaten up of worms," by which is meant the lousy evil, as may be seen by Bolsec's words.§ Now were this true, yet if we may believe a learned man of the Church

* Andream Carolostadium a daemone interfectum, ministri Basileenses sribunt, in epistola quam ediderunt de morte Carolostadii. Bellarm. [Ibid.]

† In Vita Carolostadii. [Tum peste obiit ipso natali Christi Carolostadius cuius funus cum academicis et Boquinus est prosecutus. Vit. Theol. Exter. p. 144. Francof. 1618.]

‡ Joannes Calvinus vermis consumptus expiravit, ut Antiochus, Herodes, Maximinus, Hunnericus, testatur Hieronymus Bolsecus in ejus Vita. Qui etiam addit, eum daemonicis invocatis, blasphemantem et exerantem obiisse. Bellarm. [Ibid.]

§ Sed ad Calvinum nostrum, et ad gravissimos ejus, variosque morbos, quibus misere ad extremum usque Spiritum exacerbiatus fuit, revertamur; quem prater eos quos, Beza referente, commemoravimus, eo quoque morbi genere afflictum constat, quo justo Dei iudicio, quosdam manifestos, et apertos Dei hostes, qui divinum honorem atque gloriam invaserant, sibique usurparant, vexatos punitosque legimus, is est pedicularis. Nam et hi vermes, &c. Vita Joan. Calv. c. 22.

of Rome, who was one of Calvin's irreconcileable enemies, it is not to be looked upon as so strange a thing ; for he has undertaken to prove that nothing is more natural, than for the body of man to breed vermin and lice, and produced many famous men who have died of this disease.* It must indeed be acknowledged, that the lousy evil is not always a symptom merely natural, but a vindictive effect of the Almighty, when, without any reason in the humours, or state of the body, sufficient to cause that loathsome disease, it appears to the destruction of some notorious sinner. Yet it is certain that this distemper is naturally incident to human bodies, since lice do seem to consist (chiefly) of that salt, which, together with other humours, does copiously breathe through their pores. This truth may be reasonably gathered from the chymical resolution of lice, and from their medicinal powers and effects in some distempers. Besides that, I have been assured by a learned gentleman, much addicted to physical experiments, that he formerly having three or four days together visited glass furnaces, attending on some experiments there made, has taken from the backs of the glass-makers (after they had sweated profusely in the same shirts for three days together) a great quantity of dry salt, which was caked on the outside of their shirts, and that this salt being put into a glass, and set two or three days in a sunny window, did all become a body of little creeping things like lice. If therefore the salt which exhales through the pores of man's body, be the matter of lice, the considering physician may give good reason, why and how the disease may be produced, as it often happens to be, in bodies first decayed, and disposed to such a malady by other diseases, where the putrefaction of humours and the resolution of the animal salts being very great, and the internal heat and motion, which should carry them through the pores, being too little, this unctuous and saline matter stops in them, and there stays long enough to be animated into lice, which as soon as enlivened creep forth in abundance, and are successively followed by dreadful numbers of the same generation, so long as the patient lives. But I shall say no more of the natural causes from whence this evil may sometimes proceed ; but supposing it now to be as certain a token of divine vengeance, as Bellarmine would have it, I shall shew these two things :

* Vasseur Annal. de l'Eglise Cathedr. de Noyon, p. 720, 721.

1. That Calvin did not die of this disease.
2. In case he did, the Church of Rome hath no reason to triumph in it.

1. That Calvin did not die of this disease. This will, I think, be manifest : 1. By reflecting upon the first author of this story. 2. By considering what others, both Papists and Protestants (of unquestionable authority) have written concerning Calvin's diseases and death.

1. By reflecting upon the first author of this story. Bolsec was the man who first told this tale to the world, and not till thirteen years after Calvin's death. All the rest, Surius, Lingeus, Lessius, &c. are beholden to him for it. Nor do I wonder that they licked up his vomit: but it may seem more strange that Cardinal Bellarmine should, if we consider these two things :

1. That he was Calvin's mortal enemy. 2. That many Papists who have made it their study to defame Calvin, are ashamed of him.

1. That he was Calvin's mortal enemy. One main occasion of his enmity was this : Bolsec having quitted his habit (for he was a Carmelite friar at Paris), turned quack, and came to Geneva, where finding himself in no esteem among the learned physicians, he resolved to set up for a divine: for something he delivered about predestination, he was first gently reproved by Calvin ; but he more boldly insisting again upon it, he was then confuted by him openly in the congregation, exposed to public shame, and by the magistrate committed to custody as a seditious person, and not long after by the senate banished the city. This public disgrace he would never forgive Calvin, but ever after bore a mortal hatred against him, though he durst not openly proclaim it till after Calvin was removed into another world, and out of a capacity of confuting his calumnies. This alone is enough, the Romanists themselves being judges, to overthrow the credit of this story. I might also add, that Bolsec was a necessitous indigent person, and a man of debauched morals, and so every way qualified for the feigning of a story, which he was well assured would be amply rewarded.

2. So gross are his impostures, that many learned Papists, who have made it their study to defame Calvin, are ashamed to quote them. Florimond de Raymond speaking of Calvin : "From this head," saith he, "as from Pandora's box, are come forth all those troops of evils, all those legions of miseries,

and those torrents of blood, which have overflowed the better part of Europe.—He that would know all these particulars, let him read the authors who have taken the pains to write them.” And then quoting Surius, Bolsec, and some others in the margin, he adds, “ I have on purpose omitted many things, for the fear I had that hatred had sometimes more power over them than truth.”* (Of those many things he omitted, this foul disease is one.) And Don Peter of St. Romuald, a priest and monk : “ As for Theodore Beza,” says he, “ Jerome Bolsec, and James Lingey, all that they have written of Calvin is suspected of flattery, or of too great sharpness against him.”† It is no wonder he should say, that Beza is suspected of flattery ; but doubtless had not Bolsec’s calumnies been very broad and ill-coloured, a monk would never have suspected them.

2. The falsehood of this tale will be further manifest to all men, by considering, what other persons, both Protestants and Papists (whose authority, in this matter at least, is unquestionable), have written concerning Calvin’s diseases and death.

1. For Protestants, I shall insist only upon Beza’s history of his life. He, pretending to tell us all his diseases, makes no mention of this ; besides, that the account he gives of him some days before, and at his death, is utterly inconsistent with it.

Bolsec says, “ That from his ulcers, and from his whole body, issued most noisome stinks, by which he was loathsome to himself and his family : and that his domestics reported, that for this very reason he would not be visited.”‡

Now Beza tells us, That after he had finished his will, *viz.* April 26, a month and one day before his death, he signified to the syndics, and all the senators, that he had a desire to

* Qui en voudra scavoir toutes les particularitez, lise les Auteurs qui ont pris la peine de l’Ecriture. J’en laisse à dessein beaucoup de choses, pour la crainte que j’ay que quelquefois la haine ait eu plus pouvoir sur eux, que la vérité. De la Naissance de l’Heresie, l. 7. c. 8. p. 879.

† Car pour Theodore de Beze, Hierosme Bolsec Medecin de Lion, et Jaques Lingey Ecossois, Docteur de Sorbonne, tout ce qu’ils en ont écrit, est suspect de flaterie, ou de trop grande aigreur contre luy. Thres Chronolog. et Historique l’An 1550.

‡ —— Cum ex ulceribus totoque corpore gravissimi foetores emanarunt, ob quorum graveolentiam et sibi ipsi gravis, et, quæ eum circumstabat, familie erat. Quam causam fuisse etiam hi ejus domestici narrarunt, quod visitari se nollet. Vit. Calv. c. 22.

visit them once more in their senate-house, before he died, and hoped to be carried thither the next day ; they desired him to consult his health, and sent him word that they would come to him, which accordingly they did : after he had thanked them for their favours, and given them much good advice, he gave to every one of them his right hand, and dismissed them weeping. April 28, at his request, all the ministers within the jurisdiction of that city came to him, to whom, after he had given an exhortation, he likewise reached out his right hand to each one in particular, and sent them away with heavy hearts and wet eyes. May 19 (and he died May 27), the ministers being wont on that day to eat together, a supper was prepared for them at his house, and he being carried to them from his bed into the next room, “I now, brethren,” saith he, “ come to take my last farewell, I shall never more sit at table.” Before supper was ended, when he required to be carried back again to his bed-chamber, he said, with a smiling countenance, “This wall between us will not hinder, but though absent in body, I shall be present in spirit with you.”

I need repeat no more : if this already said be true, what Bolsec says must be false. And that this is true, every one must grant (considering the time when and the place where it was published), who grants that Beza was in his wits ; for he published it presently after Calvin’s death at Geneva, where, if but one tittle had been false, every citizen almost must have known it : if the senators had not all visited him, and the ministers all met at his house, a few days before his death, as Beza reports, every one of those senators, and every one of those ministers would have given him the lie, and proclaimed him to the world for an impudent impostor : especially those who were Calvin’s enemies would have noised it abroad : whereas not one, either great or small, was found who contradicted one word of it.

2. But we need not the testimony of Beza, or any other Protestant ; the Papists themselves, even those who have written much more than is true to defame him, shall be his compurgators : for if they take no notice of this disease, who, could they have found any colour for it, would have made the world ring with it, it is certain they took it for a fable.

Now whosoever will take the pains to peruse the book quoted in the margin,* he will find many of these collected to

* *La Defense de Calvin contre l’outrage fait à sa mémoire, &c. Par Charles Drelincourt.*

his hands : but because the book is not in a language that every one understands, I shall touch upon two or three of them. Florimond, when he reckons up his diseases, gives not the least intimation of this.* Jaques Desmay insists vehemently on those diseases Calvin was afflicted with toward the end of his life, as impostumes, hemorrhoids, stone, gout, in short, no less than a dozen, and then insults over him, making them as visible tokens of God's vengeance upon him, as his smiting the Philistines in the hinder parts, and putting them to a perpetual shame. Now can it be imagined that he would have omitted this could he have found the least show of truth for it, since this would have stood him in more stead than all the rest ? I shall add but one more, *viz.* Jaques le Vasseur, who is so far from forgetting anything that might be to Calvin's disadvantage, that he tells many silly ridiculous tales on purpose to disgrace him, and yet hath not one word of this loathsome disease, or anything like it. I think I need say no more to vindicate Calvin from this ugly aspersion.

But let us now suppose it true, and see what the Romanists will get by it. Had indeed this disease fallen upon Calvin, but never upon any man of the Church of Rome, they might then seem to have had something whereof to glory ; but if for one Calvin, we can name many greater men of the Roman communion who have had this distemper, they were then ill-advised in objecting this against Protestants. I shall at present name three only, an Emperor, a King, and a Pope. The Emperor is Arnulphus,† the natural son of Charles the Great :‡

* La Naissance de l'Herésie, l. 7. c. 10. p. 888.

† ——— Minutis quippe vermis, quos pedunculos aiunt, vehementer afflictus spiritum reddidit. Fertur autem, quod prefati vermes adeo scaturirent, ut nullis medicorum curis minui possent. Luitprand. De reb. Imperat. et Reg. l. 1. c. 9. Arnulphus autem ——— ut Dei nutu pediculari morbo brevi consumptus sit. Plat. in Vita Formos. [p. 144. col. 2. Colon. Agr. 1611.] Demum Imperator Arnulphus longi infirmitate tabefactus, nulla arte medicabili poterat adjuvari, quin a pediculis consumetur. Mart. Polon. l. 4. p. 318.

‡ Herode, le Empereur Arnoul, fils naturel de Charlemagne, Acastus fils de Pelias, Calisthenes d'Olinthien, Sylla, Clement VII. et Philip II. Roy d'Espagne, furent mangez des poux. Mr. Chevreau, le Tab. de la Fortune, l. 3. c. 5. [p. 339. Par. 1651.] — Quos (sc. abscessus) pravo humore se per totum corpus diffundente, pedicularum tanta eluvio secura est, ut vix indusio exui, et a quatuor hominibus paulum suspenso in linteo corpore, quantum per infirmitatem licebat, a duobus aliis per vices detergi posset. Demum post tertianam febrem hectica semper eum conficiente, et accedentibus ad eam plagosis in manibus et pedibus ulceribus, dysenteria, tenesmo,

the King is Philip II. King of Spain, a zealous persecutor of the Protestants : the Pope is Clement VII.*

2. I should now proceed to the other part of the charge, which is blacker and more frightful, *viz.* “that Calvin, invoking the devils, died blaspheming and cursing.” But I need not insist upon it, because nothing had been said to expose the falsehood of the former, but what is as truly applicable to this also. If therefore the reader please to recollect what hath been already delivered, he will find this equally confuted by it. Though I might have added several other convincing arguments, had I not already exceeded the bounds allotted to this discourse. But the truth is, the calumny is so broad and naked, that it confutes itself.

I think it is now evident enough, that the Church of Rome can have no advantage against the Protestants, from the unhappy deaths of their prime pastors and teachers. For, as Bellarmine himself pretends but to five such, so I have made it appear that the stories he tells of these are all of them either plainly false or impertinent. Happy Protestants! So happy in this respect, that if it might pass for a note of the true Church, they need desire to be tried by no other. And since Bellarmine, in the next chapter, boasts of the miraculous success of the Papists against heretics, I desire them to consider whether it was not at least next to a miracle, that one Luther, who opposed himself to all the united forces of the Papacy, should live so long, and at last come to his grave in peace. It may, as I said before, seem strange to some, that Cardinal Bellarmine should abuse the world by such feigned stories as he does ; but let it be remembered that he was a Jesuit, and the wonder will then be the less.

Among all those princes, and other secular powers, who have (under God) been the great defenders of the Protestant faith, the Cardinal hath told us of no unhappy ends ; we may guess at the reason, for if he could, we cannot imagine he would have spared them, since these would have been much more to his purpose than Pharaoh, Antiochus, Herod, Nero, Domitian, Maximinus, Julian, and some others, which he has impertinently enough alleged. Though, had he produced many examples of this sort, one Queen Elizabeth would have been enough to have put in the balance against them all.—Having

et hydropsi jam manifesta, et verminante semper illa pediculorum eluvie,
&c. Jacobo Aug. Thuan. Hist. 120. [vol. 4. p. 790. Par. 1609.]

* Mr. Chevreau, *ibid.*

shewn how much the Protestants are beholden to Bellarmine for this note,

2. Let us now see whether the Church of Rome can make as fair a claim to it. Or rather, whether she, which will needs be the only Church, will not by this character be unchurched. To begin with her churchmen.

I might insist upon the dismal ends of Cardinal Wolsey, Charles Caraffa, Cæsar Borgia, Angelot, and many other cardinals. But because if any rank of men among them be exempted from this sad fate, we may in reason expect it should be the bishops of Rome, who by their flatterers are made not only equal to but in many things superior to the angels who cannot die; I shall therefore more especially reflect upon them: for if we find that the Popes themselves not only die like men, but have had many of them the most unhappy deaths, we may safely conclude that the Church of Rome will never be able by this mark to prove herself the true Church.

We have already heard the unhappy deaths of Pope Nicholas III., Paul II., Clement VI., Leo X., and Clement VII., to which I shall add a few more out of many that might be mentioned.

Pope Clement II.* and Victor III.† were poisoned. Pope John X.‡ and Benedict VI.§ were both strangled in prison. Pope John XXII. when he promised himself a long life, was suddenly crushed to death by the fall of his bed-chamber, in his palace at Viterbium.|| John XII. [XIII.] was smitten, says Luitprand, by the devil, in the very act of adultery, and died of the wound within eight days.¶ Stella tells us that he was stabbed by the husband of the adulteress.** Martin, that he died in adultery suddenly without repentance.†† In this they all agree, that he received his death's wound in the very act of lewdness; the devil well rewarded him for the honour he was wont to do him in drinking his health.†† Pope Boni-

* Plat. in Vit. [p. 201. Lond. 1685.]

† Jo. Stella, [ut supra] p. 160. Mart. Polon. Chron. l. 4. p. 363.

‡ Mart. Polon. l. 4. p. 334. § Mart. Polon. p. 341.

|| Papir. Masson. fol. 188. [Par. 1586.]

¶ Luitprand. de Reb. Imperat. et Reg. l. 6. c. 11. Quadam nocte extra Romam, dum se cum cuiusdam viri uxore oblectaret, in temporibus adeo a Diabolo est percussus, ut intra dierum octo spatiū eodem sit vulnere mortuus.

** Stella ad Ann. 958. [ut supra] p. 133.

†† Chron. l. 4. p. 353.

†† Luitprand. l. 6. c. 7.

face VII.* and Boniface VIII.† both died as shamefully as they lived wickedly. Benedict IX. (the writers of his life tell us) was seen after death in a monstrous likeness ; and being asked (after he had told who he was) why he appeared in such a horrid shape ? he answered, because I lived like a beast, without law and reason, it is the will of God and of St. Peter that I should bear the shape of a beast rather than of a man.‡ I should not have mentioned this had I not found it confirmed by Cardinal Baronius,§ who also gives the reasons from Petrus Damiani, why he appeared in the compounded shape of a bear and an ass ; and adds the reason himself, why he appeared by a mill.|| Alexander VI., by the mistake of his cup-bearer, drank himself that deadly wine which he had prepared for the poisoning of his cardinals, and died forthwith.¶ Paul IV. went off the stage with as much infamy as his enemies could desire ; scarce was the breath out of his body when the people, mad with fury, ran through the city to destroy whatsoever had been done by him, cursed the memory of the Pope, and of all Caraffas (the name of the Pope's family), burnt the new prison of the Inquisition he had made for heretics ; then running to the Capitol, demolished his marble statue, drew the head of it through the streets of the city, and, after many contumelies, threw it into the Tyber. In fine, an edict was promulgated, by which all were commanded, under the heaviest penalties, to deface the arms of the Caraffian family, in what place soever of the city they were found.** This may, I think, suffice for Popes.

It were easy to observe several circumstances in the deaths of Morgan, Gardiner, Sanders, and others, which men would be apt to conclude were special indications of God's displeasure against the cause ; but it is needless, because the advantage of the Protestants, as to their churchmen, is already sufficiently manifest.

I might now proceed to secular persons, and shew that their

* Plat. [ut supra, p. 189.] et Stella. [ut supra, p. 137.]

† Mart. Polon. l. 4. p. 439. Stella. Ann. 1291. [ut supra, p. 210.] Plat. [ut supra, p. 298.]

‡ Plat. [Ibid. p. 199.] Mart. Polon. Stella.

§ Baron. Annal. An. 1054. n. 54, 55. [vol. 17. p. 104. col. 2. 105. col. 1. Luc. 1745.] || Ibid. n. 56.

¶ Papir. Masson. l. 6. fol. 374. Richer. Hist. Conc. General. l. 4. par. 1. p. 144. [p. 76. Colon. 1683.]

** Onuphr. in Vit. [Plat. ut supra, Contin. p. 119.]

advantage is as great with respect to them. It was before observed that the Cardinal has not produced so much as one unhappy death of a Protestant prince. There has been one indeed here in England since the Cardinal's death—I mean King Charles I. But what is one to the many that might be mentioned of Popish princes? In France alone, within the space of threescore years, we meet with no fewer than five, immediately succeeding one the other, without so much as one happy death between, *viz.* Henry II., Francis II., Charles IX., Henry III., and Henry IV. I now leave the Romanists themselves to make the conclusion which most naturally follows from the premises: and for a conclusion of this discourse desire them to observe the difference between Bellarmine's authorities and mine: whereas what he reports of the unhappy deaths of Protestants, he has taken it from Papists, and from such Papists who were their most implacable enemies; I have not said a word of the unhappy ends of Cardinals, Popes, and Popish princes, but what I have borrowed from their own writers.

Part

THE
FIFTEENTH NOTE OF THE CHURCH EXAMINED,
VIZ.
TEMPORAL FELICITY.

Ultima Nota est, Felicitas Temporalis, divinitus iis collata qui Ecclesiam defenderunt.—Bellar. cap. xviii. de Notis Ecclesiae.

WE are now come to the last of those notes, by which the Cardinal would persuade us the true Church may be easily known. He had laboured hard to make them up so many; but he was resolved never to leave raising of notes, till he had his full complement of fifteen. And in this he seems to have been put to such a shift, as some generals sometimes are, who, finding themselves in straits, draw out their front to a great length, and fill up their ranks with sutlers' boys, and other weak attendants on the camp, merely to make a show, and amuse the enemy with a vain appearance of numbers, when they have reason to dread the issue of the battle. It is certain no man before him ever counted up so many notes as he has done. Some, he tells us,* make but two, some three, some four, some six, some ten or eleven, as they please, and one, he thinks, reckons up a dozen; which is the most that any ever durst venture upon, till he himself came on the stage. And then he at last makes a new discovery, that they were all short in their account; for that the Notes of the Church were just fifteen. So that here must be three at least, purely his own, that were never heard of before; and for which they that like them must stand for ever obliged to Cardinal Bellarmine's happy invention. But then what a miserable condition was the Church in for many ages! For if there be no salvation out of their Church, as they of the Romish persuasion confidently affirm; and if this Church is to be known by certain notes, as they endeavour to prove; and if these notes be

* Bellarmin. de Notis Eccles. c. 3. [vol. 2. p. 101. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

dubious and arbitrary, and often differing, according to the fancy of their several writers, as cannot be denied ; then what hopes can there ever be of finding out the true Church, and ending the controversy this way ? And if two or three notes are sufficient to determine the matter, as some have thought, to what purpose are we troubled with all the rest ? But if the whole number be judged necessary to make it evident ; what a hazardous estate were men in before this great author had perfected the list ? And their danger continued a long time ; for they were never acquainted with divers of these notes, till towards the latter end of the sixteenth century.

But the Cardinal himself seems to be sensible of the weakness of many of them, when he acknowledges,* "That the moderns commonly assign but four, and those taken out of the Constantinopolitan Creed, where the Church is declared to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." And these alone, without the help of any other fictitious supernumerary notes, are abundantly sufficient to demonstrate that any Church, to which they do belong, is most certainly a true Church. And therefore to gain credit to those he has thought fit to add, he tells us they may be "some way reduced to these four." But for my part, I do not understand how it can possibly be done. And not to mention any of the rest, I will instance only in this last note I am about to examine. Temporal Felicity (which he cautiously restrains to success in war), for ought that I can perceive, is not by any means reducible to any of the four. It will not evidence the unity of the Church ; for if this note be allowed, then Mahomet the Great, Solyman the Magnificent, Gustavus Adolphus, and divers others, were all good Catholics in their time ; and instead of one, we must have as many Churches, as there have been fortunate and victorious princes in the world, that have fought for the propagation or defence of the most different religions. Neither is it any better argument for sanctity ; unless to such as can esteem "gain to be godliness," and account Turks and Saracens holy men. Much less can catholicism be proved from it ; since good success was never known to attend always upon the same side : and the catholic Church and universal empire, whatever ambitious men may dream, are never like to be the same thing. And least of all can we from hence gather any Church to be Apostolical. The primitive Christians were unacquainted with the glories of worldly triumphs.

* Bellarm. de Notis Eccles. c. 3. [Ibid.]

They subdued the nations, but it was with spiritual weapons : they conquered the remotest parts of the earth, but it was by the holiness of their doctrine, the blamelessness of their lives, and the greatness of their sufferings. The Apostles did not march out to convert the world with crosses on their breasts, and javelins in their hands : one of them once drew a sword in his Master's quarrel, but was presently commanded to put it up again, with a severe commination. So that I do not see to which of the four received notes this of "temporal felicity" can be tolerably reduced. I shall therefore examine it as it stands by itself.

But by the way I cannot but observe, how subtilly the Cardinal has endeavoured to secure this note ; which he must needs know was liable to many material exceptions. And at once to prevent them all, he tells us roundly, "that Catholic princes never adhered unto God heartily, but that they most easily triumphed over their enemies." This he very confidently affirms, but without any offer at a proof : but yet this will furnish him with an evasion that may be always ready. For whenever any of those princes, which he calls Catholic, shall be shewn to have been unfortunate in their adventures : it may be quickly replied, that they did not then "heartily adhere unto God." And the contrary may be asserted with equal assurance ; and so here is a controversy started, about a matter of fact, which all the men upon earth are never able to decide. For the intentions and inward dispositions of men's minds are discernible to none but the Searcher of hearts. And how then can this be pretended to be a note by which we should know the true Church, when the sole condition, upon which the evidence of it is made to depend, is to us altogether impossible to be known ?

And this alone might be sufficient to evince the vanity of it ; but yet I shall endeavour to make it appear further, by shewing :

I. *That Temporal Felicity cannot be esteemed a Note of the Church.*

II. *That the instances the Cardinal brings do not prove it.*

III. *And that there are many examples of infidels and heretics, as he accounts them, who have been as prosperous and successful in the world, as any of his Catholics. If these things may be severally made out, then the Church of Rome is like to get but little advantage by this Fifteenth Note.*

I. And that *temporal felicity* cannot be esteemed a note of the true Church, seems evident enough, and that principally for these reasons :

1. Because God has no where promised it in all the holy Gospel ; and it is no better than vain arrogance, and a fond kind of presumption, to make that a mark of the Church, which is neither essential to the constitution of it, nor yet inseparably annexed to it by virtue of any Divine promise. The Jews indeed were encouraged in their obedience by the proposal of many temporal blessings ; and if they did faithfully and conscientiously observe the law, they were assured of great and miraculous victories over their enemies. " Five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight," Lev. xxvi. 8. But Christianity, which is a more spiritual religion, that is established upon better promises, and has more full and express revelations of everlasting happiness than they had, has no ground at all to flatter itself with the foolish hopes of external felicities and worldly glories. I cannot find one word in all the New Testament, upon which such an idle imagination can be probably grounded. Nay, on the contrary, distress and afflictions seem to be the most ordinary portion that our blessed Lord has been pleased to allot the best of his followers in this life. He told his disciples, " In the world ye shall have tribulation," John xvi. 33. " Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. The expressions are plain ; and many more might be brought to the same purpose : and if they could be all warrantably restrained to some certain persons and times, yet they would afford but a very feeble argument to prove that " temporal felicity" was a note of the Church ; and if any better can be produced, it is more than the Cardinal has done. His error in this is very like that of the Jews, who anciently did, and still do expect a triumphant worldly kingdom in the days of their Messias. But they are far the more excusable ; for, as I said, they had some promises of temporal blessings, and so might have some colour for such a mistake : but it is hard to frame any apology for one, who professes to believe in a crucified Saviour, that shall distinguish his Church by the same character which they did, without the least show of a promise to support it. It is to be feared, when he invented this, that his eyes might be something dazzled with purple robes and red hats : or his fancy

intoxicated with the false glories of extirpating heretics by force of arms.

2. But be that as it will ; this note must fail him again, because for several ages together the Church could not pretend to any such thing as "temporal felicity." Three hundred years at least, were passed over in nothing almost but continual persecutions. Christianity was made the common object of the hatred and fury of the people ; and wicked and inhuman princes spent most of their rage and cruelty upon it. They racked their inventions to find out new and exquisite ways of torture. The prisons were thronged with crowds of confessors, and the theatres and places of public execution were sprinkled with the blood, and strewed with the ashes of the holy martyrs. And a long time it was that these lamentable spectacles were very frequent ; and when they happened to have any little intermission, it was rather a refreshment than a rest ; nothing but a space of taking breath, that they might gather strength, and prepare themselves for another encounter. And all this while to be sure the Christians could obtain no other victory over their adversaries, but by convincing their infidelity by their patient suffering. Before Constantine shewed them what it was, they were great strangers to "temporal felicity ;" and how often they have had it interrupted since that, I will not now inquire : but whatever this may be of the Roman, it is not a note of the true catholic Church ; for that we know flourished divers ages, in the greatest purity, without it.

3. And if this be not proof enough, yet the unspeakable miseries which the Church of God must endure in the days of Antichrist, is an undeniable demonstration that this note cannot be allowed. The Cardinal himself confesses,* and I think all the writers of his communion do generally agree, that the Antichristian tyranny shall far exceed all the cruelties that were inflicted by the worst of the heathen emperors. This others believe as well as they ; but then they conceive that some of these grievous calamities may be already past in the sharp and lingering torments, the many dreadful massacres, and the cruel and promiscuous slaughters of later times ; which can scarce be paralleled by any thing the Christians suffered of old under Pagan idolaters. But Bellarmine, and the rest of the Church of Rome, for some reasons, do imagine that all

* Bellar. de Rom. Pontif. l. 3. c. 4. et 17. Corn. a Lap. in Apocal. cap. 3d. [cap. 13. p. 233. col. 1. Antv. 1627.]

this is still to come. But be it past or future, it quite overthrows the credit of this fifteenth note. For the state, which by his own confession the Church must be in during that Antichristian persecution, is very inconsistent with "temporal felicity." There is no stress therefore to be laid upon this; no promise can be pretended for it, and the time has certainly once been, when it was not, and it is frankly acknowledged, that the time shall come again, when it will not be a note of the Church.

II. This might be sufficient to put an end to this dispute; but because the only way the Cardinal has taken to confirm his opinion, is by collecting some historical passages, which he thinks make for his purpose; I shall briefly examine several of them, and make it appear, *that the instances he brings do not prove what he intends.*

And as for all those taken out of the Old Testament, they were particular and signal successes conferred by Almighty God upon his faithful people, according to some special promises formerly made them, as I have intimated before; and they might be accounted subsequent signs of their obedience, but not of their being the true Church; for so they were in all conditions; as well when they were oppressed by the Philistines, as when they drove the Canaanites out of the land; as well in Babylon, as in Palestine; no less in the midst of their most grievous afflictions than in their most prosperous and flourishing estate. And after Jeroboam had made the separation, the two tribes were the true Church still, and the ten were the schismatics; notwithstanding the various events of their wars, and that the victory inclined sometimes to the one side and sometimes to the other.

To what he says of Constantine and Theodosius, and some other of the ancients, it might be reply enough to tell him, that their successes, supposing his note to be true, would make nothing to the purpose he contends for; because, as has been often proved, those times were not infected with any of those gross errors which the modern Church of Rome has been guilty of.

But yet to shew what partiality he uses in the choice of these instances, I will inquire a little into one of them. He tells us, "That a vast army of the Goths, of more than a hundred thousand, was totally defeated in one battle, and Rhadagaisus their king, together with his son, taken and slain, and not so much as one of the Romans killed or wounded." Thus he

from St. Austin relates it.* Others say there was no battle, but that this huge multitude of above two hundred thousand men, or, as some make them, double that number, being inclosed among the barren mountains of Fesula, were so extremely weakened with famine, that Rhadagaisus endeavoured to make his escape alone, but being taken prisoner, was put to death, and the rest became an easy prey to their enemies. This the Cardinal mentions as the felicity of Honorius: and it was indeed a very wonderful success; but then it is almost the only thing that happened well in all his time. And notwithstanding this miraculous victory, he was one of the most unfortunate emperors of them all. He suffered the capital city of the world to be taken by Alaric the Goth,† without ever daring to attempt to relieve it; though the siege lasted about two years. But he was all that while very wisely diverting himself, and feeding his poultry at Ravenna: and his mind was so intent upon his business, that when one of his officers brought him the news that Rome was lost, he had not a thought of that ancient and formerly glorious seat of the empire, but imagined it had been nothing but a cock he had of the same name; and was much troubled, and mightily surprised that the poor bird should be dead so soon, that took meat out of his imperial hand but a very little time before.‡ Besides this fatal blow at the head, that was so lightly regarded, many other cities and towns were utterly destroyed, the country laid wholly waste, such multitudes of the people most miserably butchered all Italy over, that it was but thinly inhabited for some ages after; and this and other incursions of the barbarous nations in those days had so shaken the state of it, that we must begin to date the ruin of the Western empire from the reign of Honorius; and he that can produce him for an example of temporal felicity, may be fit to believe that it is a note of the Church.

I shall pass over the rest of his instances, till he comes to the Holy War: and there he takes notice, "how the Christians then being about Antioch, with a small number, and those in great despair, and in a very languishing condition for want of necessary provisions, and the enemy at hand with a potent numerous army; and when they were in this distress,

* *De Civit. Dei*, l. 5. c. 23. [vol. 9. p. 183. Bassan. 1797.] *Oros. lib. 7. cap. 26.* [cap. 37. p. 590. Mogunt. 1615.] *Paul. Diacon. lib. 13. [p. 10. Par. 1631.]*

† See *Procop. Vandal.* l. [vol. 1. p. 180. Par. 1662.]

‡ *Procop. ib.*

it was at length seasonably revealed to somebody where the holy lance was, which was brought into the field in the nick of time, and carried before the soldiers, and three holy men appeared in the clouds fighting for them ; and by this means they unexpectedly got an entire victory, with the slaughter of a hundred thousand of the Turks.” I will not question the truth of any part of the story ; but let any man consider the various successes of that war, and that it was concluded to the advantage of the infidels, who remained masters of all at last, after so much blood and treasure expended, and so many of the bravest spirits of Europe thrown away upon those tedious and fruitless expeditions ; and he will be apt to suspect that here the Cardinal did manifestly prevaricate, and that he had a real design to betray his own Church, and give up the cause to Mahomet.

After this he boasts of a notable victory over the Albigenses ; “ where a hundred thousand of the heretics were totally routed by his Catholics, that were not the tenth part of their number.” It is true, the histories of those times do generally mention a very great overthrow given those poor people, in a battle, by a very inconsiderable handful of men under the command of Simon Mountfort ; and that Peter, king of Arragon, who came to their assistance, was slain on the place, and Raymund, earl of Tholouse, forced to fly. And upon this occasion, to strengthen the Cardinal’s argument as much as is possible, I think it will not be amiss to call to mind some other of their glorious victories over these Albigenses. These, we must know, are a sort of heretics, that were spread far and near, and had a long time infected the Church ; some say they had continued ever since the days of the Apostles.* Pope Innocent III., very desirous to find a remedy for this inveterate evil, appoints divers eminent preachers to go into the parts where they were thought to be most numerous, and teach nothing there but the pure doctrine of the Church of Rome ; and endeavour by this means to convince them of their supposed errors. But this way not succeeding ; the heretics remaining obstinate still, notwithstanding the diligence of the missionaries, he bethinks himself of a more effectual expedient. Since persuasions will not prevail, he is resolved to try whether terror and force may not have a greater power of conviction than argument. Therefore he publishes a crusado against the heretics, as had been

* See Usher de Christ. Eccl. Success. et Stat. cap. 10. sect. 23, 24, &c.
[Works, vol. 2. p. 341, &c. Dubl. 1840.]

formerly done against the infidels in the East ; and sets forth his bull of plenary indulgences to all that should engage in this sacred militia, and makes them as sure of heaven, as those were that should be sent on his errand to the Holy Land. Upon this extraordinary encouragement, great multitudes flock together from all parts, and full of zeal and rage they march on, and perform many notable exploits, to the eternal honour of themselves, and him that put them on that pious work. In one city they put threescore thousand to the sword, sparing neither sex nor age. And when the tender-hearted soldiers found there were some Catholics in the place, they desire to know whether these might not be admitted to quarter. The Pope's legate, that was attending the action, commands them to make no distinction, for fear a heretic might escape under that pretence. And he excuses the severity of the order with a Scripture expression : "The Lord knoweth who are his." This beginning was enough to strike terror into all that heard it ; and then they go on valiantly, still doing great execution wherever they come. Whenever any town or castle was surrendered, it was always upon these articles : "They that would be converted, had their lives ; they that refused, were hanged or burnt." After they had proceeded a while in this manner, Simon Mountfort, a stout zealot, is by common consent chosen general of the pilgrims (for so they were called), and appointed commander in chief for this new kind of holy war ; with a promise of the government of what had already been, or should happen hereafter to be taken from the heresies. He, armed with a sufficient power, quickly forces Raymund de Tholouse out of his dominions. The poor ejected prince flies to the great Lateran Council for relief ; they, as if the question had been about matters of faith, suffer the debate to come before them, and depriving Raymund, constitute Simon earl of Tholouse. Raymund hereupon retires into Spain ; Simon's new subjects suddenly revolt, and force him to go himself and send his wife to several courts to beg such supplies as might be sufficient to reduce them to obedience. But before that could be done, he is crushed to pieces with a great stone out of an engine, as he lay before Tholouse. Soon after, his younger son Guy is likewise slain at another town ; Almarie the elder, and heir to his father, highly enraged with these misfortunes that fell so thick upon his family, swears desperately that he would never remove the siege, till he was master of the place. But notwithstanding this insolent

bravado, he is constrained to go away in a disgrace, aggravated with the guilt of a presumptuous foolish oath. Before this, Raymund was returned, and entered again upon his legal inheritance, and died at last in possession of it, and left the succession to his son ; when Almaric was fain to wander up and down the world, earnestly entreating all that pleased to pity his condition, to afford him some succours, that he might be enabled to endeavour the recovery of what had been lately usurped by his father. And now, upon a review of the successes on both sides thus far, the heretics seem clearly to have the advantage. And for what followed after this, it is an argument of the particular care the Divine Providence has always had in the preservation of those distressed Albigenses ; that could never be destroyed by the many potent combinations that have been made against them, and the violent persecutions they have endured within these last five hundred years ; but in spite of all the malice of their enemies, the remains of them, at this day, are enough to exercise the valour of another Mountfort, if any unhappy age should chance to produce one.

For his Catholic victories in Switzerland and the Low Countries, if the Cardinal had pleased to acquaint us what they were, perhaps they might be easily balanced. However, for ought I can learn, the Protestant Cantons are in as good condition as the other. I am sure the Confederate Provinces of the Netherlands are grown a very rich and potent commonwealth, and if they have thrived only by their losses, then they may plead miracles in confirmation of their religion ; which he makes a note of the true Church, as well as success in warlike adventures.

He just mentions a victory of Charles V. over the Lutherans, 1547 ; obtained, as he says, by a "divine miracle." I suppose he means at the battle in Mulberg, where the forces of John Frederick, elector of Saxony, were overthrown, and himself taken prisoner. And I confess it was a considerable victory, but I cannot understand the miracle of it. But grant there were one, yet it must be remembered, that afterwards Charles himself was driven out of Germany by a Lutheran prince,* and forced to clamber over the Alps by torch-light, in a dark and rainy night, among craggy rocks and steep and slippery mountains, carried in a horse-litter by reason of his illness. And when he had with great labour and hazard overcome the difficulty of the passage, and was gotten pretty well out of danger,

* Thuan. lib. 10. [vol. 1. p. 286. Par. 1606.]

the fright had made such impression on him, that he still concited Maurice was at his heels, insomuch that when he was met by the Venetian ambassador, with a body of horse, sent by the senate for the security of his person, he was afraid of his own succours, and could hardly be persuaded that they were not some of the enemy's troops. He was indeed a gallant and generous prince, adorned with many heroical virtues, becoming the greatness of the character he bore, and had been often crowned with a success answerable to the resolution and bravery of his mind; but this hasty and lamentable flight lost him the fruit, and did something eclipse the glory of his former victories, and made him frequently complain of the change of his fortune. And being by this, and some other misadventures he met with, made sensible of the vanity, and grown weary of the incumbrances of the world, he resigned the empire and his other dominions, betwixt devotion and discontent, and retired into a monastery in Spain, where he ended his days. And this I hope might prepare him for an eternal, but it is no part of his temporal felicity; nor can it ever from hence be proved that that of which he professed himself a member was therefore the only true Church. Or if it were so, as the Cardinal thinks, when he took Frederick, it was certainly otherwise when he ran away from Maurice. And here I might conclude the examination of this note, for since he attempts to prove it no other way but by an induction of particulars; if he had failed but in one instance, as I have shewn he has done in many, the whole argument could be of no force.

III. But to illustrate and confirm the matter farther, *I shall bring some examples of infidels, and such as he esteems heretics, who have been as prosperous and successful in the world, and gained as signal victories, as any of his Catholics.*

When Uladislaus, king of Poland and Hungary, had concluded a peace with Amurath II.* and solemnly confirmed it with an oath, Eugenius IV. writes him word, that the league, being made with the enemies of the Christian faith without his consent, could not be valid. Julian, the legate, absolves the king and the rest from the oath they had taken, and with many specious pretences persuades them to break with the Turk, and enter into an actual war. Amurath, who was now withdrawn into Asia, hearing what had happened, and being informed of the preparations that were making against him, returns unexpectedly with a mighty force, and meets with the Christians

* Cuspinian, in Amurath I. [Amurath II. p. 24. fol. 1. Antv. 1541.]

not far from Varna, where was begun a most bloody and obstinate fight, which lasted, as they report, for three days with dubious success. Amurath at length, upon the sight of the picture of our Saviour on the cross, that was painted in some of the Christian banners, passionately prays him to avenge the injury done to his name by those his faithless followers, who had so lately sworn the league, and so basely and perfidiously broken it without any provocation. In the end the Christians are put to the rout, Uladislaus is slain, the brave Huniades hardly escapes, the treacherous Legate, who had drawn them all into this distress, is found upon the ground stripped and wounded, and ready to expire, many other great prelates and nobles are killed on the place, and a miserable slaughter made of about thirty thousand of the common men. A remarkable instance to shew that success does not always attend the Papal benediction.

The unfortunate battle of Mohatz* was almost parallel to this in some circumstances : for Solyman the Turkish emperor, invading Hungary with a potent army, Paul Tomoree, first a soldier, afterwards a monk, and then an archbishop, is chosen general against him, under Lewis the young king. He hastily engages the enemy, and is utterly defeated, himself slain in the field, with many more eminent churchmen, and other persons of the best quality. His head is fixed upon a pole, and carried about the Turkish army in a scornful and ridiculous kind of triumph. Lewis, a prince of great hopes, scarce yet come to the flower of his youth, is drowned in a ditch, and found sticking in the mud, above a month after the fight. I might add many more the like successes of the Turks and Saracens against those that have defended the Church, which the Cardinal esteems the only true one. But I think these two may suffice.

It were not difficult neither to collect numerous examples of those he calls heretics, who have often put his Catholics to the worst : I shall name but one, which, for the multiplicity of good fortune, may well serve instead of many, and that is Queen Elizabeth, whose memory will always be honourable, when envy and detraction have done their utmost. At her coming to the crown she found herself involved in war with two potent neighbours, Scotland and France. She was destitute of allies abroad, and not secure of the affections of her people at home. The

* Fume Hist. Hungar. Book 1. [p. 29, &c. Lond. 1600.] Cuspin. Orat. Protrept.

many and great revolutions that had been in matters of religion especially, in the three foregoing reigns, had created such violent animosities, and so very different interests in the nation, that they seemed to threaten her government with perpetual faction and disorder. But all these difficulties that might be thought insuperable were happily overcome, or wisely composed, and her long reign of more than four and forty years, passed over with such a constant series and tenour of success, that my Lord Bacon, who was intimately acquainted with the proceedings of those times, and admirably well qualified to judge, has left us a particular treatise of the felicities of Queen Elizabeth.* Among these I shall not now number the many escapes she had out of the hands of desperate villains, who frequently attempted to assassinate her sacred person, but only take notice of some other conspiracies and rebellions, and that famous invasion of 1588.

The first open rebellion was begun in the north, and carried on by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland,† who having gotten together betwixt four and five (Catena says twelve) thousand men, they declare, "that they took arms only to restore the Catholic religion, and the ancient laws of the realm."‡ But upon the approach of seventeen hundred of the Queen's forces, and the report of more that were to follow, they suddenly disperse, and fly into Scotland, where Northumberland remaining, is delivered up, and beheaded at York, 1572; Westmoreland gets over into Flanders, is allowed a small pension from the King of Spain, lives miserably all the rest of his days, and at last dies in exile, in 1584.

The many insurrections in Ireland, in which the cause of the Cardinal's Church was always pretended, which were encouraged by the Pope, and often strengthened with foreign assistance, were all of them happily suppressed.§ The last was the longest and most dangerous of all; but a few months before her death she received the joyful news of the defeat and submission of the rebels, and so left both her kingdoms in a settled and peaceable condition.

But among all the remarkable successes of that great Queen, the timely detection of the grand design against her life and

* See Bacon *Resuscitat.* p. 181.

† *Girolam. Caten. vita del' Gloriosiss. Papa Pio 5. solo per rimetter la Religion Catholica, &c.* p. 115. [Rom. 1587.]

‡ Cambd. *Eliz. Ann.* 1569. [p. 134. Lond. 1688.]

§ Cambd. *Ann.* 1602. [Ibid. p. 658.]

government must not be forgotten, though it never came to the decision of a battle. Pius V. who was resolved by all means to work her ruin, in a furious kind of zeal, which by some is highly commended, by his “declaratory sentence,”* deprives her of all her dominions, absolves her subjects from their allegiance, and puts her and her adherents under an anathema. There was one Ridolphi, a Florentine gentleman,† who long resided at London, under pretence of trade; to him he sends to prosecute his business diligently, and stir up all the discontented spirits of the kingdom against her, which he did with great industry, and too much effect. Spain is heartily engaged in the plot, and the Duke of Norfolk, a person highly favoured by the people, is constituted head “of the holy conspiracy,” as some of them call it.‡ Pius is so heartily bent upon the execution of the design, that besides large sums of money already remitted, he promises, if need were, to pawn all that the Apostolic See was worth, chalices, crosses, and the very clothes to his back; nay, to come himself in person into England too: a very unusual kindness, and such an honour as never had been done this nation before. But while the matter was thus zealously carrying on, and all things in a readiness, and Philip and he had swallowed the whole kingdom in conceit, on a sudden all their hopes are most unluckily dashed; the whole treaty is unexpectedly discovered by an unknown hand from beyond the seas; the Duke is taken, and receives the ordinary and just reward of a traitor. How his Holiness was affected with this miscarriage may be easily guessed; the King of Spain lamented it mightily to Cardinal Alessandrino, the Pope’s nephew; he thought there never was a neater and better begun plot in the world; and that the Queen might have been surprised with a few men from Flanders, and the business gone beyond recovery, before the news could get into France. But the greater and nearer the danger was, the greater must her happiness be, that so narrowly escaped it.

I will only add to this, the wonderful success of 1588.§

* Cambd. Ann. 1570.

† Girolamo Catena vit. di Pio 5. [Ibid.] p. 113, &c. Gabut. de vit. et rebus gesti Pii quinti, l. 3. cap. 9. [p. 102, &c. Rom. 1605.]

‡ Capo della Santa Congiura Caten. [Ibid. p. 114.] Pie conspirantium. Gabut. [Ibid. p. 103.]

§ Cambd. Ann. 1588. Grot. Hist. de Reb. Belg. l. 1. Thuan. lib. 89. [vol. 4. p. 247. Genev. 1620.] Strada Dec. 2. lib. 9. [p. 717, &c. Mognunt. 1651.] Bentivoglio della guerra di Flandra, parte 2. lib. 4. [p. 325. Par. 1645.]

The Spaniards had all the advantages imaginable on their side ; they exceeded us much, both in the bulk and number of their ships, and all manner of naval provisions ; they prided themselves in the multitude, experience, and hardiness of their soldiers. But yet when their Invincible Armada, as they vainly called it, came to be engaged, they are worsted by the English in several encounters, and at length, after the loss of many of their principal vessels of war, and a great slaughter of men, they are forced to fly, and take their course through the rough northern seas, at a very unseasonable time of the year, where many more perish by tempest. And when the poor remains of this mighty fleet were arrived at last shattered and torn on the coast of Spain, many of those that had escaped the fury of the waves, and the shot of the enemy, are taken away by a great mortality (occurred probably by grief, or shame, or the hardships they endured in this miserable expedition), almost as soon as they were come ashore ; in nothing more fortunate than their companions, that had been buried in the ocean, but only that they found a grave in their own country. Cardinal Bentivoglio, having given a full relation of the whole matter, reflects very sensibly upon it, and tells us,* "that there have been few other designs that were ever longer in the projecting, few carried on with greater preparations, and it may be not any after all more unhappy in the execution." Historians of all sides are perfectly agreed as to the event. But those that are unwilling to give the English valour and conduct any part of its just commendation, impute the victory to the winds and weather only, and it is readily granted, that the Catholic Armada suffered very much by them. But that, and the death of Santa Cruz, and some other occurrences that might be named, are an undeniable argument that the Divine Providence appeared visibly for the preservation of the Protestant religion. For this was looked upon as a holy war, and many offered themselves to serve in it upon that account. Sixtus Quintus, then Pope, promoted it vigorously, and talked of paying vast sums of money towards it ; but all the opportunity that could be used could never persuade him to part with one farthing by way of advance. Yet, to shew his good will, he assisted very freely in another way. He

* Poche altre imprese furono mai piu lungamente premeditate. Poche altre con piu grande apparecchio disposte ; e niuna forse con infelicità maggiore poi eseguite. [Ibid. p. 328.]

renewed the sentence his predecessors had passed against the Queen, deposed her from her royal dignity and estate, cursed her, and all that should dare to be obedient unto her, and very kindly gave away all her dominions at once. And in the prosecution of his noble designs, he sent Dr. Allen a cardinal's cap, and intended to make him his legate here in England to settle all, and reconcile the nation to the Church of Rome. These things were so well known, that Strada the Jesuit, after a narrative of this lamentable overthrow, for fear it should be made use of to the disadvantage of his Catholic cause, as if Almighty God had manifestly favoured the heretics, in the conclusion of all, effectually confutes this last note of Bellarmine's. For when he had intimated what an unhappiness it was to the Queen and her subjects, that they had not the good luck to be conquered, as the Pope and the Spaniard had most lovingly designed, he tells us, "that the English could not therefore boast they were the more holy, because they had been the more fortunate; unless perhaps they should think the misbelief of the Saracens and Turks were to be preferred before the Christian religion, because in many successful engagements they had often defeated the forces which the Christians had with much labour brought together."* To this we willingly agree, and are glad that our cause does not stand in need of such weak supports. But then if good success will not be allowed to make for us, when it is on our side, there can be no reason it should be brought as an argument against us, when it happens to be on theirs.

After this it would be superfluous to reckon up any more of Queen Elizabeth's felicities; he that would undertake to recount them all, must write the history of her reign. And whoever is acquainted with that, will find it true what Anne D'Est, duchess of Guise and Nemours (to whose house the Queen had been no friend) was wont ingenuously to acknowledge,† "that she was the most glorious and fortunate woman that ever swayed a sceptre." This testimony, which was given her by so great a person, that could not possibly be suspected of flattery, is very considerable; but the character that was bestowed upon her by King James I. some time before he succeeded her in the throne, is greater than this, and

* Neque se magis pios venditare potuerint, quia fortunatiores fuere; nisi forte, &c. [Ibid. p. 729.]

† Thuan. lib. 129. [vol. 5. p. 1051. Genev. 1620.]

more to be valued, because of the impartiality and wisdom of the royal author. His words concerning her are these :* “There is a lawful Queen there [in England] presently reigning, who hath so long with so great wisdom and felicity governed her kingdoms, as (I must in true sincerity confess) the like hath not been read nor heard, either in our time, or since the days of the Roman emperor Augustus.” The authority of so great and wise a Prince may be enough not only to secure her memory from the malicious attempts of envious trifling pens, but to put the happiness and prosperity of her government out of question. And if Bellarmine’s note of “temporal felicity” might be suffered to take place, her example alone would be sufficient to prove the Church of England the true Church ; and the imputations of heresy and schism, which are wont to be urged with so much clamour, must by consequence be retorted upon his.

But I hope I have shewed that this can be no note ; that if it were, the instances he has brought do not prove what he would have, and that others may be pleaded as plausibly for the contrary side. And indeed any that considers it, must needs wonder, that the Cardinal’s mind should be so blinded with worldly success and greatness, or whatever it were, as to cause him in the last place, where he might have expected his greatest strength, to put in such a frivolous note, that may be easily turned a thousand several ways, that will fit the Alcoran, as well as the Council of Trent, and at best makes his Church altogether as various and uncertain as the fortune of war.

I should here have made an end, but that I have met with a late writer that undertakes to shew “the use and great moment of the notes of the Church,” &c. And he tells us, p. 1, “that Cardinal Bellarmine (after others) hath, to very good purpose, lent his helping hand to shew us the city on a hill, and hath given us marks which one would think carry majesty in their faces.” And a while after, p. 3, he imagines that the author of the Discourse concerning the Notes of the Church, “durst not let them pass by us in their majestic train, lest his reader, with Sheba’s queen, should be dazzled at the glory, transported as she was, that there was no life in her. For,” says he, “they seem to a single, not malignant eye, even triumphant notes of the militant Church.” And then he leads them out in great state, as he thinks, p. 4, as first : “Let me have leave to reckon them :” aye, with all my heart,

* King James’s Works, p. 147.

Well then : "The name Catholic, how sacred to all those who own any of the three Creeds really and veritably! The second, its antiquity : how indubitable, and above all suspicion of novelty!" And so he goes on, and shews them all in good order, till he comes to the three last, and there he draws the curtain, as if he were afraid any body should see their majestic faces. "To say nothing concerning the confession of adversaries, and unhappy exits of the Church's enemies," p. 5. Here are two of the number, which he does but just give us a little glimpse of, and then pops them away presently out of sight. But poor Temporal Felicity is served worst of all ; it has not the honour to be so much as named ; he has not bestowed one syllable upon it, though I take it to be as triumphant a note as any of the rest. But for all that, it was cunningly done to drop it, for he could not choose but be aware, that the heretics might sometimes pretend to a share of it. Now when he had given us such a view of the majestic train, as he thought fit, he concludes the paragraph with an artificial epiphonema, adorned with a very pathetical ingemination : "These, these are the notes, which (like a bill in Parliament) deserve" (what?) "a second reading." *Parturiunt montes* : O the virtue of Butler's rhetoric ! But really, I am afraid that "these, these notes, these triumphant notes," as they are by him drawn up, would be so far from being thought worthy of a second reading, that they would certainly be thrown out of the House. However, I have looked steadily upon them more than once, as they are represented by him, and as they are laid down in the Cardinal's original ; and I have not yet been able to discover the majesty one would think they carry in their faces ; but in my opinion some of their faces would have been a great deal better, if they had had any foreheads. I have carefully beheld their majestic train in its full length, and yet never fell in a swoon with Sheba's queen ; nay, I have not had so much as the least qualm of fear or admiration upon me, and my eyes were so far from being dazzled at the sight, that they were no more affected, than if I had looked on a piece of green silk. But I doubt he will censure them very hardly for it, and they are a sort of malignant cavalierish eyes. I cannot help that ; but whatever eyes they be, since I have been able to hold them open so long against the glaring imaginary splendour of "these, these triumphant notes," I will venture to draw out the whole train once more, and give a little remark upon every one of them as they pass by.

1. *The name of Catholic* : This is a note which may be easily usurped by every bold pretender ; but till it can be proved that it is joined with the profession of the true faith, the name alone is nothing but an empty and insignificant sound.

2. *Antiquity* : I shall not mention here the antiquity of some errors, nor that there were many Churches in the world before there was any at Rome ; but will freely confess that that had been ancient enough, if it had preserved that doctrine in its purity, which it received at the first. But it is well known, that the additions she has made unto that, concerning infallibility, images, purgatory, and the like, cannot be pretended to be of ancient and apostolical tradition. Nay, many of their present tenets were never declared necessary till the last age, and the Church of Rome, as it is now constituted, can be esteemed no older than the Council of Trent, that is, about forty years younger than the Reformation.

3. *Duration* : By this the Cardinal would persuade us, that his true Church has been from the beginning, and shall continue to the end of Christianity. The first we deny ; the second can never be proved till the day of judgment. We are sure the Church of Rome has been changed already from what it was ; and we hope and believe that it will be changed again from what it is. And then what would become of the duration they boast of, if they should ever reform themselves from those errors and abuses which have crept in among them, as has been often attempted, and a long time most earnestly desired, by many of the best and most impartial of their own communion ? So that granting this to be a note, it would make against them both ways. For what is past, we know what alterations have been made by them, and they can never be secured against others that may happen hereafter.

4. *Amplitude, or multitude and variety of believers* : This can by no means be made a note of the Church, for the time was once that Christ's flock was a little flock, Acts i. 15 : " And the number of the names together were" but " about an hundred and twenty." And afterwards the Arian heresy had almost overspread the face of Christendom, insomuch that the whole world was thought to be against Athanasius, and Athanasius against the whole world. Or should we let it pass for a note, they could gain but little by it ; for they are infinitely exceeded in multitude, not only by heathens and Mahometans, but by Christians of other denominations.

5. *Succession of Bishops* : How far this may be necessary to the being of a Church, I need not dispute. But the uninterrupted succession they of Rome are wont to glory in, is manifestly false: for besides the long vacancies that have sometimes happened, and the many schisms they have had, when two or more have pretended to the Papacy, and no man could determine who had the right, which must make it dubious, the confessed heretics that have possessed themselves of the infallible chair, must quite cut off, at least interrupt the succession. Or, if they have it, notwithstanding this, or any other objection that might be made, we of the Church of England can plead the same.

6. *Agreement in doctrine with the primitive Church* : This is a good note, indeed, if they mean the truly primitive Church; for that agreed with the Scripture and doctrine of the Apostles. But then I hope they will not have the confidence to affirm, that their prayers in an unknown tongue, their half-communion, their adoration of the host, and many other things which they now receive, are agreeable to the practice and belief of that primitive Church.

7. *The union of members among themselves, and with the Head* : Of this they are continually making their brags; but the many and violent contentions that have often been betwixt the several pretenders to the papal dignity; and the endless feuds and animosities that are kept up amongst them about many controverted points, do sufficiently declare that their Church has been rent and torn with factions and intestine divisions, as much as any other society. Or if they were as firmly united, as they pretend, it is no more than other combinations of men have been, in known and wicked errors.

8. *Sanctity of doctrine* : For they generally assert, as the Cardinal does here, that the Roman Church maintains nothing that is false, either in matters of faith or manners. If they were able to prove this, there might be some reason indeed that their Church should be esteemed the "mother and mistress of all Churches," as she has been wont of late to style herself. But since the power of deposing princes has been openly assumed, and frequently practised, and never yet condemned by any, either Pope or Council; since the doctrine of equivocation, and many other absurd and impious opinions are taught by their casuists, and made use of by their confessors, in directing the consciences of their penitents; and since these, and many more very dangerous errors, do not

only escape without a censure, but are approved of, and encouraged by their governors, I do not see how they and their Church can possibly be excused from the guilt of them.

9. *The efficacy of doctrine*: Here we are told of the wonderful success they have had in the propagation of their faith, and the conversions that have been made of whole nations. And supposing it were as they say ; yet heresy and infidelity have often had as great and swift a progress in the world, as any that their doctrine can boast of ; and considering the pravity and corruption of human nature, it is not strange, that the most gross and pernicious errors should be more readily received, and spread themselves faster, than the most divine and sacred truths.

10. *Holiness of life*: This is indeed the most real commendation of a Christian ; and I will not go about to rob them of the glory of it. But then it cannot be denied, but mere philosophers, and some of the ancient, and many of those whom they account modern heretics, have been of a very strict and unblameable conversation ; and divers of their Popes, and other ecclesiastics of the greatest eminency of place, have been very infamous for all sorts of wickedness and debauchery ; and their very religious orders have been often complained of, for the neglect of their discipline, and looseness of their lives ; as is abundantly testified by their own authours.

11. *The glory of miracles*: These alone were never a note of the true Church. And those extraordinary gifts which were bestowed at first, for the confirmation of Christianity, we think they are ceased long ago. But we are forewarned of "false Christs, and false prophets, which should shew great signs and wonders," Matth. xiv. 24. Which methinks should make a Church very careful how they made any pretension to miracles. But the Church of Rome is resolved to do it, and would fain persuade us, that there are many great ones wrought among them to this very day, and, as they believe, always will be. But we know, and they will not deny it, that many of the miracles they have talked of, are mere forgeries and delusions ; others altogether incredible, and but weakly attested, and wholly unworthy of the seriousness and gravity of the Christian religion ; most of them said to be done in corners, and are never to be seen but among themselves : when they please to oblige us Protestants with the sight of a few of them, they may then deserve to be farther considered ; till that be done, they must give us leave to think, that their

Church is reduced to great straits, when it shall stand in need of such slight artifices as these to support it.

12. *The light of prophecy* : This, if they had it, can bring no more advantage to their cause, than the other. The Church of God anciently, when extraordinary revelations were more common, had not always prophets in it. And when any appeared, the prophet was to be tried by the faith of the Church, and not the Church by the predictions of the prophet. And we are still commanded "to try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world," 1 John iv. 1.

13. *The confession of adversaries* : This, if the Cardinal's instances were pertinent, would yet be but of little consequence ; for if some Protestants have spoken favourably of his Catholics, some of his Catholics have spoken favourably of Protestants. Or if we should be willing to hope well of some of them, as we are ; and they should adjudge us every one to eternal damnation, as they generally do ; this would be but an ill sign that their Church must therefore be the truer, because it is more censorious and uncharitable than ours.

14. *The unhappy end of the Church's enemies* : A wise man would be something afraid of passing this into a note, before he was himself safe in his grave. "For all things come alike to all ; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked," Eccles. ix. 2. Many of the most zealous patrons of the Romish persuasion, have met with as tragical and unfortunate ends, as the most accursed heretic that ever was devoured by vermin, or burnt at a stake.

15. *Temporal felicity* : This may be placed in the same rank with the former ; it is altogether as variable and inconstant as that ; no certain judgment can be made upon it. They are not to learn that the enemies of their Church have been often successful ; and that victory has not always waited upon their Catholic arms ; no, not in their most holy wars ; when religion has been the only ground of the quarrel.

Thus upon a review of all the notes in order, as they are mustered up by the great Cardinal, it may appear to any unprejudiced inquirer, that he has missed of his aim ; for that they are either no notes of a Church at all, or not proper to that of Rome.

And now after the highest pretences of an infallible Church, and the absolute deference and submission which they say is due unto it, any man that shall seriously consider the matter,

must needs wonder, they should have no surer means at last to find it out, than a few slight and improbable, nay, some of them, very vain, false, and extravagant conjectures. The Protestants, whom they will not allow to be certain of any thing, have far better evidences than these, and as good assurances of the truth of their Church as can be desired. For we think the true faith, true worship, and a right administration of the sacraments, do unquestionably make a true Church. These the Romanists themselves cannot deny to be the great and necessary notes ; and if the controversy betwixt us come to be determined by these, it will soon appear which communion we ought to prefer.

We make profession of the whole Catholic Apostolic faith, as it is contained in the Holy Scriptures, and briefly comprised in the three Creeds ; which is all that was ever received in the primitive Church : they have made large additions to the ancient Belief, and increased the number of the Articles from twelve to four and twenty ; many of which were not so much as heard of in the first ages, and never made necessary to be believed, till about fifteen hundred years after the publication of the Gospel.

We worship Almighty God, and none but Him ; and unto Him we pray in a language we understand, through Jesus Christ our only Mediator, in whose name when we ask, we are sure to be heard : they have a kind of worship which they give to saints and images, which, as to all external acts of adoration, is the very same they pay to God himself ; and when their addresses are directed unto Him, all their public service is in an unknown tongue ; and they set up to themselves many mediators of intercession, when they cannot tell whether they hear them ; but it is most certain that God has never promised to hear them for their sakes.

We receive the two sacraments which Christ hath ordained in his Church, and administer them both in such manner and form as he has appointed : they, without any Divine authority, have made seven sacraments ; and in the Lord's supper they believe that there is offered up a proper propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead ; they adore the elements, which they think are transubstantiated into the body and blood of our Saviour ; and suffer the laity to communicate but in one kind, robbing them of the cup, contrary to the plain institution and express command of our blessed Lord.

And since we have the true faith, true worship, and the

sacraments rightly administered, it is evident that we are not deficient in any thing that is necessary to the constitution of a true Church. But they will never be able to prove themselves such a one, by the late additions they have made to the Creed, and their many deviations from the primitive rule. And yet they will be continually vaunting that they are not only a true Church, but the only true Church in the world; and upon this presumption they thunder out their anathemas upon all Christendom besides, and confidently condemn them for a company of heretical and schismatical conventicles. But they cannot justify that rash and uncharitable sentence, nor make good any part of this heavy charge. For we that heartily believe all the ancient Creeds, cannot be accused of heresy; neither are we guilty of schism, because we only reformed those errors and corruptions which they had introduced, and wanted not sufficient authority for what was done. But if they are still absolutely resolved to stand to the censure they have passed, and allow no true Church upon earth but their own, it is not Cardinal Bellarmine's Fifteen Notes that will ever prove it.

CHAP. III.

SAFETY OF SALVATION IN A PROTESTANT CHURCH.

THE PROTESTANT RESOLVED :

OR,

A DISCOURSE SHEWING THE UNREASONABLENESS OF HIS TURNING ROMAN CATHOLIC FOR SALVATION.

WE are all, I hope, thus far agreed, that sincere Christianity is the sure way to salvation. That to be saved, we must have the hearts, and not content ourselves with the bare name and naked profession of Christians. That the authority of God and divine truth, and no worldly or carnal concern, must sway and govern our whole conversation. If we be not religious in good earnest, resolving and endeavouring to honour God in heart and life, according to the Holy Gospel of our blessed Jesus, it is no matter to us what religion we profess, or to what Church we join ourselves. Wickedness and hypocrisy, through what Church soever our way lieth, lead assuredly to hell. A wicked Protestant and a wicked Papist will in hell be of the same communion.

True Christianity is none other but that which was taught at first by Christ and his Apostles, and all they who believe and live according to their doctrine shall be saved. Herein again we are all, I suppose, agreed. And if so, I think it very reasonable we should agree as well in that which I now add. It is not material to inquire, whether a man be of the Church of Rome, or of the Church of England, to find whether or no he may be saved; but he that would satisfy himself of the possibility of salvation in the way wherein he now is, ought to inquire, whether he believe and live according to the doctrine taught by Christ and his Apostles; seeing they who do this are good Christians, what other names soever men may bestow

upon them, and all that are such shall be saved. If, therefore, I may be able to satisfy myself that I believe and live according to the doctrine delivered by Christ and his Apostles, I have no reason to doubt of the possibility of my salvation in the way wherein I now am, though it were so, that I had never heard to this day of any such thing as a Church headed by a Pope or Bishop of Rome. And I am yet somewhat confident, that a man may believe and live according to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, and never hear of a Bishop of Rome; because once men certainly did so, and yet were saved.

The next thing therefore that I have to do, is to inquire by what means I may certainly know, what was the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles; for by the same means whereby this may be known, I may also know the certain way to salvation. If there be no such means left us, we are all fools in professing a religion, the certain doctrine whereof can by no means be known. If such means there be, there must be some certain records safely conveyed down from their time to ours; for by what other means we at this distance of so many hundred years should be certainly informed what they taught, is by me inconceivable. These records then are to be diligently searched into, and impartially examined, and whosoever is found to believe and practise according to the doctrine in those records contained, may be concluded to be in the way to salvation.

Such certain records we have, even the books of the holy Evangelists and Apostles, which, together with the books of the Old Testament, we call the Holy Scriptures. In this we are all again unanimous; both Papists and Protestants agree, that the doctrine in these books contained, is the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, and Divine truth. Whence it certainly follows, that whatsoever doctrine is contrary to the doctrine contained in these books, whether it be taught by Papists or Protestants, is to be rejected, as none of the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles. It ought not therefore to satisfy me, that this or that doctrine is taught by the Church of Rome, or by the Church of England; for by which of them soever it be taught, if it be found contrary to the doctrine of the holy Scripture, it is by the consent of both Churches to be rejected. Now seeing we Protestants take this holy Scripture, and it only, for the rule of faith and life, it is certain, that holding to this rule, we do not err either in belief or practice: while on the other side we cannot be sure, that they

do not err in both, who receive another rule ; till it appear the other rule, which they receive, is as true and certain as ours is acknowledged to be. Our part of the rule, and that which indeed we take to be the whole, being granted us, all the question is about their part of it. Ours is on all hands granted to be most sure and certain, theirs alone remains disputable ; and therefore I cannot yet see any reason, why I should think their way safer than our own, except it can be safer to follow an uncertain than a certain rule : which I think nobody will be so hardy as to affirm.

The rule which they of the Roman communion advance against ours, is that of Tradition. I am therefore next to consider, first, what they understand by it : and, secondly, what greater reason I can find to persuade me, that it is safer to trust to it, whether singly, or in conjunction with our own, than to our own alone, which is the holy Scripture.

This Tradition consists of such doctrines of faith and practice as are supposed to have been taught either by Christ himself, or being dictated by the Holy Ghost to his Apostles, were delivered by them to the Church, not in writing, but in word only, and so have successively been handed down from father to son, unto the present age. And these are all, according to the Council of Trent, to be received with equal affection of piety and reverence, as the holy Scripture.

Now I confess, if it may appear as evidently to me, that Christ or his Apostles left such doctrines to the custody of the Church, of equal necessity to the salvation of Christians, with those that are written in the Scripture, as it doth that they left us these which are written in the Scripture ; and if I may be well assured, that these very doctrines which the Church of Rome now holds, and pretends to an authority of imposing upon all Christendom, are indeed the very same which were at first (as above said) delivered to the Church, I can see no reason why I should not be bound to believe the one as firmly as the other. For seeing it is the authority of the first preachers of it, and not barely the writing of it, that binds me to believe the doctrine ; if I can be equally assured, that as well what is unwritten, as what is written, was preached by them as necessary to the salvation of mankind, I must needs also own an equal obligation upon me to believe them all alike.

But neither of these could I ever see cleared, nor can I conceive any hope that I shall hereafter. And seeing the proof of both lies wholly upon them, who affirm both ; I cannot be

obliged to believe them, till by such proof they have convinced me. In the meantime, it seems enough to me, that God himself was pleased to signify to the world his will in writing, which I cannot imagine why He should do, had He not intended we should learn his will from what is written, and not from any unwritten tradition. And I am the more confirmed in my opinion by this, that he did not use this way of revealing his mind unto men at the first, not till after the world had had a very long time to discern by experience the unfaithfulness of unwritten tradition. So that this, and some other considerations whereupon the Papists use to ground their arguments against both the necessity and perfection of the Scripture, seem to me very fully to evince both the one and the other; and so to leave no room at all for their unwritten traditions as any part of the rule of faith and life.

Yet, seeing they, who are always preaching this doctrine to us, that there is no salvation for them that are not of their communion, preach it not as a private opinion of their own, or of some few others in that communion; but as the generally received doctrine of that Church, which pretends to be no less than infallible: it concerns me so much the more to use all possible diligence, to find out what truth there may be in this assertion. And that, not only because I shall thereby discern the necessity of changing my religion to make sure of my own future happiness; but also because the determination of this one point will at once put an end (as it seems to me) to all the disputes that are now between the Papists and us. If I can find it true, that no man can be saved out of that communion, I shall be a fool to trouble myself with the study of the Scriptures, and seeking out for myself in them a way to heaven; when I may be sure, by stepping over the threshold out of one Church into the other, to meet with an infallible judge, whom if I do but follow, I cannot go amiss. And to dispute any longer with myself, whether I should do so or not, would but shew me fitter for Bedlam than for any Church; seeing none but the maddest man alive would dispute for damnation. On the other side, if I shall find it false, that a man cannot be saved out of that communion, I must needs be convinced that the Roman Church, which hath determined it for a certain truth, hath already erred both in faith and charity, and that having erred, she is not infallible; and being not infallible, by her own confession, cannot be that One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, out of which there is no salvation. So

that as this assertion of that Church shall be found to be true or false, even so will the Popish religion appear also to be.

But here I meet with a very great difficulty in my way, as I am going to seek out the truth or falsehood of this assertion; that however I may be able to satisfy myself, yet I shall never, for ought I can see, be able to satisfy them who are the authors of it, any other way, than by a total submission of my own judgment and conscience too to their determination, and a blind obedience to their will. The dispute (as is evident) is between two Churches, the one whereof challengeth to itself the big-swollen prerogative of being the lady and mother of all Churches; a sovereign authority of prescribing to the faith of all Christians; the right and incommunicable privilege of being the sole and infallible judge of all controversies in religion; finally, an unquestionable power of defining and declaring to all the world the true and only terms of salvation. Now that this Roman-mother and mistress-church, sole commandress and infallible judge, having already in the fulness of power determined it, and by her supreme authority imposed an oath upon her subjects to maintain it, that none out of her communion can be saved, should after all this, in pure condescension to men declared heretics, divest herself of her authority, lay aside her infallible definitions, come down from the tribunal and the throne of judicature and majesty, and stand at the bar submitting herself and the whole cause to an indifferent and equal trial, is a thing as little to be hoped for, as it is yet unagreed upon by what law, jury, or judge, the controversy should be decided. And truly, on the other side, it seems to me altogether as unreasonable in her to accept, that we Protestants of the Church of England, though we pretend to nothing of this exorbitant power over her or other Churches, or of determining disputes for all the world, should yet, upon a naked summons from her, whose authority we question, and see no reason to acknowledge, forthwith subscribe to the sentence of our own condemnation, without any fair and legal process, or indeed so much as yield to a trial, where our professed adversaries must be at once the law-makers, accusers, witnesses; and yet this is most notoriously our case.

What course now in this case can be taken by us? The Church of Rome tells us expressly and peremptorily, we cannot be saved out of her communion. Must we believe her without any more ado? That is indeed the way to make a

short end of all our differences, for then we must yield to be hers, or else run headlong to damnation. But if we believe her not (as for my part I know not how we can do, till we see some reason why we should do so), the dispute, for ought I can see, is like to be endless. For no such reasons can or ought she to give us, if she will be constant to herself, and stand to her own principles (as will plainly appear anon), and if she desert her own principles, she must yield herself to be fallible, and not the true Church ; and then in vain is all talk of reasons, why they that are not of her communion should be damned.

However, suppose it be pretended (as indeed it is) that we have had sufficient reasons given us why we ought to believe her in this point : this then is the present question between us, Whether she hath given us sufficient reason for this, or no ? She confidently affirms it ; we as confidently deny it. She calls us obstinate heretics for denying it, and lays many a heavy curse upon us : we for this think her a very unreasonable and imperious mistress, usurping an authority over us, which God never gave her. Who, I wonder, shall now be thought fit to decide this dispute ? She will be tried and judged by no other than herself ; for she is resolved to be sole and infallible judge in all controversies of religion : that is, in plain terms, she will accuse us, and she will leave us no room for our own defence ; she will condemn us, and she will not permit us to question the justice of her sentence. She tells us, we are bound to believe her, and obey her, or else we must die eternally for it. We desire some reason may be brought to convince us of this duty : and she tells us again, she is our supreme and infallible mistress, and mother, and judge ; and so the conclusion is, we must believe she hath this supreme authority and infallibility, because she is supreme and infallible ; which we can yet see no reason to believe, and therefore cannot believe ; and because we cannot believe it, we are declared to be heretics, and in a state of damnation.

Seeing then, that the Church of Rome will by no means recede from her claim to this supremacy and infallibility, it seems plain to me, that there is no possibility of satisfying her any way whatsoever, but by yielding myself up entirely to her without any farther dispute. But because I cannot do this without violence to my conscience, and incurring that very damnation, which she would persuade me thereby to prevent ; I must of necessity leave her awhile, to satisfy

herself about the truth and charity of this doctrine as she can ; whilst I, for my own private satisfaction, take into a very serious consideration these two things.

I. *Whether I can discern any solid ground to hope that I may be saved, as I am now a Protestant of the Church of England.*

II. *What more hopeful way to salvation the Church of Rome can put me into, should I enter into her communion.*

If the result of this double inquiry shall be, that I really think myself in a fair way to salvation where I am already, and cannot discern any more hopeful way to it in the Church of Rome, I must needs account myself bound in conscience, and under the penalty of damnation, to steer my course according to the best light I shall be able, by such a diligent and impartial inquiry, to attain unto, and content myself with that religion, which seems best and safest to me, till some better and safer can be found.

SECT. I.

The first thing I am to inquire into, is, what good ground of hope I can discern that I may be saved as I am a Protestant. And here the first thing I am to consider, is, what I mean by the name of Protestant, as it is owned by the members of the Church of England, and as I can heartily answer to it.

By a Protestant, I understand no other but a Christian, adhering firmly both in faith and practice to the written word of God, and protesting both against the faith and practice of the Papists, and all others whatsoever, so far only as they are either repugnant to the holy Scripture in anything, or ungrounded on the same in things pretended by them necessary to salvation. Such Protestants do we of the Church of England profess ourselves to be, as is apparent unto all, from the sixth of our Thirty-nine Articles, affirming, "that the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

This is our very first principle, as we are called Protestants, and such an one I do heartily profess myself ; neither see I yet the least cause to doubt of my salvation, whilst by the grace

of God I live answerable to this profession. For that the Protestant religion, built upon this principle, is a safe religion, is, I think, altogether as plain, as that Christianity itself, pure and unmixed, is the way to salvation; because it is plain, that this religion we profess, holding to this principle, can be nothing else but pure and unmixed Christianity, being that and no other which is contained in the holy Scripture.

Is then the holy Scripture the word of God, or not? Was it given unto us of God to be the rule of our religion, that is, of our faith, worship, and holy conversation, or was it not? If Bellarmine* may be credited, this is the declaration of the Catholic Church, both in the third Council of Carthage, and also in that of Trent. "The books of the Prophets and Apostles are the true word of God, and the sure and stable rule of life." And as he shortly after adds, "the most sure and safest rule." Now, whether it be the complete, perfect, and adequate rule, as we constantly affirm; or only a partial rule, or but some part of it, as the Papists contend; itself, when diligently consulted, will be best able to inform us. For it is on all hands granted to be the word of God, which cannot lie; and therefore unquestionably true in all things whatsoever it teacheth us; and of those many excellent things which it very plainly teacheth, its own perfection and sufficiency is one, and for my present satisfaction very considerable.

I find, in the first place, that God himself writ the Ten Commandments, the complete rule of piety and justice, with his own finger, Exod. xxxi. 1, 18; Deut. ix. 10, and x. 2, 4: that He commanded them to be written on the posts and gates, Deut. vi. 9, and xi. 20: that Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, Exod. xxiv. 4; and delivered the writings to the priests to be read unto the people, Deut. xxxi. 9: and that the king was to have by him a copy of it for his direction, Deut. xvii. 18. I find many curses denounced against the breakers of it, Deut. xxviii. 58, and blessings promised to them that keep it, Deut. xxx. 10. I find it was expressly forbidden to add unto it, or to diminish from it, Deut. iv. 2, 12, 32: to "turn from it to the right hand or to the left," Josh. i. 7: and that the good kings were careful to order all things according to it, and to reform what has been amiss by it, 1 Chron. xvi. 40; 2 Kings xxii. 13. And therefore, I

* *De Verb. Dei, l. i. c. 1. [vol. 1. p. 1. col. 2. Prag. 1721.]*

do not wonder to hear the Psalmist saying, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," Psal. xix. 7: nor to find Isaiah sending men to the law, and to the testimony, saying, "If any speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20.

Again, I find our blessed Saviour himself, and his Apostles after him, very frequently appealing and referring their hearers to that which had been written in the books of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets. "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them," saith Abraham in the parable, Luke xvi. 29. "Search the Scriptures," saith Christ, John v. 39, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." I find that St. Luke, writing his Gospel, gives his Theophilus this good reason for it: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed," Luke i. 4. "The things which are most surely believed among us," ver. 1; "all things of which himself had perfect understanding from the very first," ver. 3. I find St. John, who wrote last of all the Apostles, affirming, that though Jesus did "many other signs which are not written in that book of his, yet these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name," John xx. 30, 31. And finally, I find St. Paul asserting the perfection of the holy Scripture as fully and plainly as any man can speak, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17; saying, that "the holy Scripture is able to make a man wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Now what more can we desire, than to be made wise unto salvation? And we are here plainly told, that the holy Scripture is able to make us so. What more can be needful to direct us in the way to salvation, than what we may learn from the Scripture? It is profitable for our information and establishment in the truth, for the confutation of error and heresy, for the correction of vice and wickedness, for our instruction in righteousness. It is so profitable for all these purposes, that thereby the man of God, the pastor and teacher, may be made complete, and well furnished for all the branches of his office, all the works of his holy calling. In short, it is able to bring us to faith in Christ Jesus; and

“whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16.

Furthermore, from the same Scripture I also learn, that unwritten or oral tradition hath ever been found too deceitful a thing to be relied on for so great a matter as salvation. I find that before the flood, notwithstanding the long lives of men, the few principles of natural religion, and the easiness of learning and remembering things so agreeable to human nature, yet all flesh had soon “corrupted his way upon the earth,” Gen. vi. 12; and “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually,” ver. 5. And after the flood, the whole world was quickly overrun with idolatry: so ill was the doctrine which had been preached by Noah and his sons, preserved by oral tradition. Nay, I find, that after God was pleased to give the Jews his will in writing, their teachers had so corrupted the doctrine of God with their traditions, that it was a great part of our blessed Saviour’s business to rescue it from those traditional corruptions. He reproves the Scribes and Pharisees for “transgressing the commandments of God by their traditions,” Matth. xv. 3; shewing how they had made it of “none effect by the same,” ver. 6; and that “in vain they worshipped God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” ver. 9. And St. Paul warns the Colossians to beware “of being deceived through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,” Col. ii. 8. And the special occasion of writing most of the Epistles, yea, and the Gospels too, seems to be the danger that Christians were in of being seduced by false teachers, from the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, under the pretence of tradition. Such were the “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” Matth. vii. 15; “false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ,” 2 Cor. xi. 13; pretending to “another Gospel,” Gal. i. 6; men of “sleight and cunning craftiness, lying in wait to deceive,” Eph. iv. 14.

From what I find in the Scripture, I must needs conclude, till I be better informed, that it is a sufficient rule for us to go by; and that, so long as we hold us to it alone, in our faith and practice, there can be no necessity of resorting to the Church of Rome, for that unto which our Bibles at home can direct us. The Scripture is the Word of God, and sure rule of faith, saith the infallible Church of Rome, if Bellarmine may be believed: this holy Scripture “is able to make us

wise unto salvation," saith this infallible Scripture; and we take no other but this holy and infallible Scripture for the rule of our faith and religious practice, say we Protestants. What now should hinder me to infer from hence, that if the Scripture be the Word of God, we Protestants are very well as we are; for we have the word of the infallible God, and if it may stand us in any stead, the word of the infallible Church (as she will needs be accounted) to assure us, that adhering to the holy Scripture, we are in the ready and sure way to salvation.

Further yet, As I am a Protestant of the Church of England, I do declare, in the words of our eighth Article, "That the three Creeds, Nice Creed, Athanasius Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." Seeing then we receive and thoroughly believe the same Creeds, and no other, which the Church of Rome herself professeth to believe; and which were thought by the catholic Church of Christ, for above four hundred years after the first planting of Christianity, to contain all points of faith necessary for the salvation of Christians, I think I have hence gathered this farther confirmation of my assurance, that we Protestants are in the direct way to salvation; that we are of the very same religion, and no other, in all the necessary points of Christian faith, whereof the catholic Church evidently was in the first and purest ages of it. In the four first General Councils, no other articles of faith were held needful to be believed by Christians, but those of these Creeds, which we entirely own and believe. Either then it is true, that these three Creeds contain all necessary points of Christian faith, or it is not. If it be true, we are safe enough, and can with no colour of reason be said to err in faith, or to deserve the name of heretics. If it be not true, then were all those primitive Christians as much heretics as we are, and knew no more than we do, what belonged to the salvation of Christians. And strangely partial is the Church of Rome in approving the faith of those Councils, which one of their most famous Popes and saints is said to have reverenced as the four Gospels, and yet to condemn ours, though in all points the very same: especially when the third of those Councils, held at Ephesus, in the time of Pope Celestine, did expressly decree, "that it should not be lawful to utter, write, or compose other faith, besides that which had been defined by the

holy Fathers congregated in the Holy Ghost in the city of Nice." Ordering that all they should be punished, "who tendered any other to such as had a desire to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, whether they were Gentiles, Jews, or of any other heresy." Whereby it is plain, that the Fathers in this third Council did conclude that Creed to comprehend the entire faith of a Christian. And indeed a man would think that the Council of Trent had in the beginning of it been altogether of the same mind, when of the same Creed it thus declared itself: "That it is that principle wherein all that profess the faith of Christ do necessarily agree, and the firm and only foundation against which the gates of hell shall not prevail."

I may, I think, upon these considerations, without more ado, be very well satisfied of the safety of the Protestant religion. The Papists themselves must grant, that whatsoever we believe or practise as of necessity to salvation, really is so; and therefore, that we do not err either in our faith or practice, whilst we live according to our own principles. For if we err in either, so far do they err also; and not they only, but all the Christian world. And here we may press them with their own way of arguing, and to much more purpose than they are wont to use it against us. When they would convince us that their religion is the safer, they are wont thus to argue: "That religion is the safer, wherein, by the confessions of both sides, a man may be saved: but both sides confess, that a man may be saved in the Popish religion; and both sides do not confess that a man may be saved in the Protestant religion; therefore the Popish religion is the safer." Supposing now this way of arguing for the safety of their religion, from the confession of both parties, be of any strength, as they must suppose it to be, who so often and confidently use it; then must the like argument from the same medium, be altogether as strong for us. I would only beg of them to grant me this (and I hope they will not say my request is unreasonable), that "that religion is the safest, all the doctrines whereof are the truest." If they will not grant me this, they must grant it safer to hold some false doctrines, than all true. But if they think this absurd, then must they give me leave thus to argue: "That religion is the safest, wherein all doctrines held or taught, as necessary to salvation, are, by the confession of both sides, certainly true. Now both sides confess, that all doctrines, held or taught in the Protestant religion, are certainly

true ; and both sides do not confess, that all doctrines held and taught in the Popish religion are certainly true : therefore the Protestant religion is the safer.” The same articles of faith, the same rules and precepts of life, the same acts of religious worship, the same holy sacraments, the same holy orders of ministers, which we have ; the very same have they also. But they have many things of all these sorts, which we have not ; no, nor any other Christians, but those of their own communion. And therefore to strengthen my argument yet more, I say, “If that doctrine and practice be the safest, wherein all good Christians agree, we are sure that ours is the safest, because all good Christians do agree in them ; and that theirs is not safe, because all good Christians do not agree in them.” Nay, let me add this more : our religion is either safe and true, in all things pretended by us necessary to salvation ; or there is no such thing as a safe and true Christian religion in the world visibly professed ; and if so, it will follow, that Christ hath no true visible Church upon earth, which I am confident no Papist will say. The consequence is plain, because all Christians all the world over, that make any figure of a Church, hold the same both faith and practice with us, in what we account necessary to salvation, the Church of Rome itself not excluded.

Though it be very certain, that we positively and affirmatively hold nothing in faith or practice, as necessary to salvation, but what is held by the Church of Rome herself, and all other Christian Churches ; yet will not the men of that Church allow us any possibility of being saved, whilst we are Protestants. And he, who of late hath been at some pains to represent the Papist to us in his fairest dress, hath laboured as hard in this point, as in any other, to shew that his Church is not uncharitable in the doctrine she delivers concerning our desperate estate. Now although I am not inquiring, whether this doctrine be charitable or uncharitable, but only whether it be true or false ; yet, for my better satisfaction, I will examine all that he saith to this purpose.

He tells us, his Church doth nothing herein but what she hath learned of Christ and his Apostles. And if he can shew me this, I must needs be fully satisfied, being verily persuaded they never taught any thing uncharitable or untrue. To shew this, he tells us, how Christ, Mark xvi. 16, hath said, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” And this is all his Church

delivers in this point. If this be all she delivers, we cannot call her uncharitable for it, for we ourselves willingly subscribe to this sentence of our blessed Saviour. Only we think, he did not here teach and authorize the Church of Rome to say, that all who are not of her faith and communion shall be damned; though she knows they believe all that Christ sent his Apostles to teach them. I do not find in the Roman Ritual that the Church of Rome, in the baptizing either of infants or adult persons, uses or requires any other confession of faith, but that only of the Apostles' Creed, which is the same we use; and if to believe and be baptized in this faith, be enough for the salvation of Papists, why is it not enough also for Protestants? And if the additional articles of the Trentine Faith, and Pope Pius his Creed be necessary to salvation, why is there no mention made of them in the Roman order of baptism?

He adds that of St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3; where, foretelling of some who in later times would come and preach a doctrine, "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving;" he brands them with the infamous title of "men that depart from the faith; giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." And several other places of Scripture he then produceth, to shew that heretics, such as they that affirmed the resurrection to be past already, or denied that Jesus is the Christ, &c. are in a state of condemnation. Other texts of Scripture he brings, wherein Christians are charged to be unanimous, and condemned for causing strife and divisions, warned to maintain unity, and not to hearken to "false teachers and seducers," &c. But I find not by all this, that St. Paul, or any of the Apostles, taught the Church of Rome, which both forbids to marry and commands to "abstain from meats allowed of God;" which teacheth divers doctrines, whereof we find not any thing in the Scripture, to condemn those for heretics that adhere wholly to the doctrine of the Scripture; or for schismatics, who hold communion with all Christians, so far as they keep to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles; and divide from the Church of Rome no farther, than in those points only, wherein they cannot hold her communion and the doctrine of Christ too. I do not see, but after the same rate, as he here defends the charity of his Church, he might also defend her justice, if she should pretend, that because Christ commanded his disciples to fetch him another man's ass and

her colt: she did but what he taught, in taking away other men's goods, and giving no other reason for it but this, that she hath need of them.

What the Papists say more, to shew that we can have no saving faith, is one of these two things. Either, first, that it is not an entire faith, there being, as they say, many articles which we believe not; or, secondly, that it is no right-grounded faith, seeing it is not built upon sufficient authority, that is to say, on the authority of the catholic Church.

Their first objection to the Protestant faith is this, that it is no entire faith. And here I am told by the Representor, "there is no more hopes for one that denies obstinately any one point of catholic faith, though he believes all the rest; than there is for one that keeps nine of the commandments, with the breach of the tenth." Now this seems to me no great encouragement to change the communion of the Church of England for that of Rome, if an entire faith and an entire obedience be but equally necessary. I wish with all my heart, I could be as sure that the Church of Rome doth not break the first Commandment, by her invocation of saints, and adoration of the Host; and the second Commandment, in her adoration of images and the cross; as I am sure that the Church of England neither obstinately denies any article of the catholic faith, nor countenanceth the breach of any one of the Ten Commandments, as that Church seems too much to do, whilst she takes no little care that the people may not know them all.

We stedfastly believe the whole Scripture, so far as we are able to understand it, explicitly, and when we do not, implicitly; we receive the three Creeds, which have ever been thought to contain the entire faith of a Christian: wherein then is our faith partial or defective? I must consider that answ: at present, seeing obstinacy, according to our adversaries, is a necessary ingredient of an heretic, I can easily assure myself, though I do not see how it is possible for me to satisfy them, that I am no heretic, for I certainly know, that I am very desirous to be thoroughly informed, and to be brought to a right understanding of all necessary truths; and am still in a readiness, and full preparation of mind, to believe any one or all of their articles, whensoever they shall please to prove the truth of them, either by Scripture, or by unquestionable apostolical tradition. I am sure, therefore, I deny not obstinately any one point of catholic faith. But till they vouchsafe me the

proof I desire, I must content myself with the Scripture, which is “able to make me wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” and not in the Pope of Rome, nor in the Roman Church.

And yet I find, that it is for this especially, that we are called heretics, that we adhere only to the Scripture, and that they often explain their meaning, in bestowing that title on us, by calling us Scripturists and Gospellers, and ridicule us for talking of only Scripture. But when I consider that this is the fundamental heresy wherewith we are charged, I cannot but a little wonder at it, and find less cause than ever to think we can be heretics indeed, or that they can call us so any otherwise than in jest. Can they grant the Scripture to be the word of God, and the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation; and yet in earnest call us heretics for being Scripturists and Gospellers? If submitting our faith in all things to the Scripture, we can be heretics, then must the Scripture teach heresy, and cannot be the word of God. What a contradiction is this in Papists to call us Scripturists and heretics? which is in effect to say, that we adhere only to the infallible truth of God, and yet are guilty of obstinate error in the faith.

What is it then wherein our faith is defective? It is in this, that we do not believe all that the Church of Rome proounds to be believed. This indeed would make us Papists, but whether it would make us better Christians than we are already, is not so certain. “A Papist,” saith the Representer, “is one that lives and believes what is prescribed in the Council of Trent.” But this rule of the Papist’s faith came into the world (as we think) too late, almost by fifteen hundred years, to be the rule of the Christian faith; and therefore he could not have represented his religion to us with a greater disadvantage than here he doth. We cannot conceive how so small a handful of prelates, most of them Italians, sworn vassals to the Bishop of Rome, assembled together at Trent, fifteen hundred years after Christ’s preaching, and wholly limited and directed in all their proceedings by the will and command of him, whose authority was the principal thing in question, and submitting all at last to him alone, should come by that immense authority, to command the faith of the Christian world, or what commission they could shew from Christ, the supreme lawgiver, to prescribe laws of faith and life to all Christendom. And we can as little conceive, how

this pretended Council could at once confirm all the General Councils, and among the rest, that of Ephesus before-mentioned ; yea, and declare the Nicene Creed to be the firm and only foundation, and yet, contrary to the decree of the Ephesine Council, and not very consistently to its own declaration, decree so many more points than that Creed contains, as necessary to be believed. Moreover, if this be the great oracle we must consult, as our surest guide to heaven, where must we meet with him, that can give us the certain sense of its general and ambiguous responses ? The learnedest of the Romish Church are not yet well agreed about it, and if the English Representer, or French Expounder, have had the luck to hit it, I am sure, that many heretofore who thought themselves as wise as either of them, have strangely missed it : or else that Council, and the religion called Popery, hath several faces for several times and countries, and in one place and time, shall look like itself, and in another shall be made to look as like the Protestant religion, as the artificial painter dares make it. But that which here puts us to a stand is this, that as the Pope at first taught that Council to speak ; so hath he reserved the interpretation of its decrees to the See Apostolic, or himself only ; and he is not always pleased in plain terms to let us know his mind, and if he should for once speak out plainly, it will be a little hard for him to assure us, that none of his successors hereafter shall contradict him, unless he can satisfy us, that he has as well the gift of prophesying, as that of defining and interpreting.

However, it is for not believing the new articles of Trent, that we are accounted heretics, and out of the way to heaven. And the reason is, because these articles are supposed to be as firmly grounded on the word of God, as any of those old ones which we believe : “ for the word of God,” saith the Council of Trent, “ is partly contained in the books of Scripture, and partly in traditions unwritten :” these are to be received with the same affection of piety and reverence, and therefore he that disbelieves any article grounded upon unwritten tradition, is no less a heretic than he that disbelieves what is written in the books of Scripture. If I knew how to be satisfied concerning the authority of this Council, I could easily tell what credit I should give to this, which it so confidently affirms. But so long as I cannot discern the reason of its pretended authority, I am a little apt to suspect, that it was not the clearness of this principle that moved it to make so many either unscript-

tural or antiscriptural decrees, but rather the desire it had of vindicating its unscriptural doctrines and practices, that made it necessary to espouse such a principle. And indeed when I well consider it, I am not a little comforted by it, that this equalling unwritten tradition with Scripture, which is the very basis of the Romish religion, is one of the most incredible things in the world of itself, and as destitute of any tolerable evidence, whence it may gain any credit to itself. It must needs seem very strange to any considering man, that the wise God should leave us a rule in writing, on purpose to direct us how to honour him, and attain unto salvation ; and give it this commendation, that " it is able to make wise unto salvation," and yet omit a great many things altogether as necessary to those ends, as those that are written, and without the belief and practice whereof, those that are written can no whit avail us, and yet never so much as once tell us in all that writing, whither we should go to seek and learn them : nay, that he should omit therein the principal point of all, and without which all that is either written or unwritten can signify nothing ; that is, to tell us that the Romish Church is the only true Church, the only sure and infallible interpreter of all that is written, and the only faithful keeper of all that is unwritten, from the mouth whereof we must receive all saving truth. This I think is a thing that must needs be very hard for any one to believe that believes the infinite wisdom, goodness, and veracity of God. And how it can ever be made evident, that there are such necessary unwritten traditions, or that these which the Church of Rome holds are they, I think no man living can imagine. I am sure, if the Papist's way of reasoning be good, it is safer not to believe this. For all sides consent, that the Scripture which we have is the certain word of God ; but all sides are not agreed, that unwritten traditions are the word of God, therefore it is safer to believe the Scripture only to be the word of God, and not traditions. We hold us to Scripture, and the Papists grant that to be the safest rule ; their greatest strength lies in unwritten, or (as they are wont to speak) oral and practical traditions, which, in plain English, is no more but report and custom, and whether there can reasonably be thought any certainty in these, equal to that of the written word of God, given by divine inspiration, can be no hard matter for a very weak understanding to determine.

That which makes these unwritten traditions of the less

credit with me, is the assurance I have, that a pretence to them, and a vain confidence in them, hath produced much error and division in the Church. It is well known, how far and how long the errors of the Millenaries, and of administering the eucharist to infants (to mention no more), prevailed on this account. And the early schisms betwixt the Roman and Asian Churches, about the keeping of Easter, and the hot contests between the Roman and African Churches about rebaptizing heretics, were occasioned and upheld by pretences on all hands to tradition. This was the only refuge of old for heretics, when they were confounded by the Scripture, to take shelter under tradition; whence Tertullian* called them “*Lucifugas Scripturarum*, men who shunned the light of the Scriptures.” “Again,” saith he, “they confess indeed that the Apostles were ignorant of nothing, and differed not among themselves in their preaching; but they will not have it that they revealed all things to all: for some things they delivered openly to all, some things secretly and to a few; and that because St. Paul useth this saying to Timothy, O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.” And again: “That good thing which is committed to thee keep.” Irenæus† also makes mention of heretics, who affirmed, “that out of the Scriptures the truth could not be found by them who understood not tradition, because it was not delivered by writing, but by living voice,” for which cause also Paul said, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” St. Augustine, in his 97th tract upon John, saith, “that all the most foolish heretics, who desired to be accounted Christians, used to colour their audacious fictions with a pretence from that sentence of the Gospel, John xvi. 12: I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” Thus did the heretics of old both plead tradition, and sought to strengthen their plea by such places of Scripture as these, which are the very same that the Papists produce to the same purpose, as may be seen in Bellarmine and others.

But I find that the orthodox Fathers of the Church were of another mind. “The things which we find not in the Scriptures,” saith St. Ambrose, “how can we use them?” Ambr. Offic. l. 1. c. 23. “Let those of Hermogenes’ shop,” saith

* Tertul. de Præscr. c. 25. [p. 210. Par. 1695.]

† Iren. contra Haer. l. 3, c. 2. [vol. 1. p. 174. Venet. 1734.]

Tertullian,* “shew that it is written. If it be not written, let them fear that woe designed for those that add or take away.” Irenaeus saith, “That what the Apostles had preached, the same afterwards by the will of God they delivered unto us in the Scriptures, to be the foundation and pillar of our faith.”† St. Jerome, against Helvidius, calls the holy Scriptures “the only fountain of truth.” “Let us bring,” saith St. Austin, “for trial, not the deceitful balances, where we may hang on what we will, and how we will, at our own pleasure; saying, this is heavy, and this is light; but let us bring the Divine balance of the holy Scriptures, and in that let us weigh what is heavier; nay, let us not weigh, but let us own the things already weighed by the Lord.”‡ And elsewhere, “the holy Scripture,” saith he, “fixeth the rule of our doctrine.” And indeed the excellent sayings of the ancients to this purpose are so well known, that I should be very vain to cite any more here.

If now, after all this, I should suppose, what I can by no means yet grant, that God having ordered the Scriptures to be written, and said so much in the commendation thereof; they do not yet contain all things necessary to salvation, but that some part of those necessary things (as both some heretics of old, and Papists now would have it believed) was only whispered privately into the ears of the Apostles, as mysteries unfit at that time to be communicated to vulgar Christians; and that the Apostles (though they were commanded by Christ to “preach upon the house-tops that which he had told them privately in the ear,” Matth. x. 27.) did not yet think themselves obliged to obey this command in writing all that was necessary; but rather to conceal for a time a considerable part of that mysterious doctrine. Yea, suppose that this was one principal use of St. Peter’s keys, to lock up all these mysteries in the cabinet of the Church’s breast (let the Church signify what it can), to be communicated to the world in after ages by piece-meal, so as she should find men prepared by a blind credulity to receive them. Yet, after all, I must needs think that we are too hardly dealt with to be called heretics for not believing these things, till something be produced, whereby we may be assured, either that these things which they command to us, come indeed from Christ and his Apostles, or that we are

* Tert. adv. Hermog. c. 22. [ut supra, p. 241.]

† Iren. l. 3. c. 1. [ut supra, p. 173.] ‡ Aug. l. 2. contra Donat.

obliged to take the Church of Rome's word for a good assurance. It seems to me a very unreasonable thing that we should be condemned as obstinate, for not believing things never sufficiently proved, whilst we know and declare ourselves prepared in mind to yield upon the first rational conviction. Why should not that Church have the charity to forbear her censures till she hath tried the strength of her arguments? Why was the Council of Trent, contrary to the custom of other Councils, so liberal of her curses, and so sparing of her reasons? One good reason would do more to make us of her communion than a thousand anathemas. Would not a man suspect that they have no good reasons to shew, who keep them so close? The plain truth is, there have been such vain pretences to tradition in all ages, one contradicting another, that it seems impossible in this age to discern between true and false. Did not Clemens Alexandrinus call it an Apostolical tradition that Christ preached but one year? And did not Irenæus pretend a tradition, descending from St. John, that Christ was about fifty years old when he was crucified? And do the Papists account either of these to be true? Many things might be named, which for some time have been received as Apostolical traditions, which the Church of Rome will not now own to be so. And those which she owns she can no more prove to be so than those she hath rejected. It were easy to shew this, even from abundance of their own writers, who assert the perfection of the Scripture, and complain of the mischief this pretence to traditions hath done; and who confess they cannot be proved to come from the Apostles. But I shall now content myself with the ingenuous confession of the bishops assembled at Bononia, in their counsel given to Pope Julius III. "We plainly confess," say they, "among ourselves, that we cannot prove that which we hold and teach concerning traditions, but we have some conjectures only." And again: "In truth whosoever shall diligently consider the Scripture, and then all the things that are usually done in our Churches, will find there is great difference betwixt them; and that this doctrine of ours is very unlike, and in many things quite repugnant to it." What said Erasmus long since on the second Psalm: "They call the people off (saith he) from the Scriptures unto little human traditions, which they have honestly invented for their own profit." And Peter Sutor, a bitter adversary of his, hath these words: "Since many things are delivered to be observed, which are not expressly found in

holy Scripture, will not unlearned persons, taking notice of these things, easily murmur ; complaining that so great burdens should be laid upon them, whereby the liberty of the Gospel is so greatly impaired ? Will they not also easily be drawn away from the observance of ecclesiastical ordinances, when they shall find that they are not contained in the law of Christ ?" And must we be heretics for not believing these so uncertain traditions ? Must our faith be accounted defective, and not entire, merely because we do not believe what no man can make us understand to come from God ? This seems very hard.

It is now time for me to consider the second objection made against our faith, which is, that it is not rightly grounded, it is not built on the authority of the Church, that is, the Church of Rome. And indeed so much weight I find laid upon this one point, that I have some reason to think that they who have been very forward at all times to give such liberal allowances of implicit faith to their friends at home would be contented with a very small measure of explicit belief in us, if we would once be taught to ground our faith aright on the sole authority of that Church. It seems to me, that for the talk about it, they are no such rigid exactors of an entire explicit faith in order to salvation, but that if we will explicitly believe this one fundamental point, the supreme authority of the Roman Church over all Christians, they would deal very favourably with us in most others, and excuse our ignorance easilier than they can persuade us to be content to be ignorant. I think I have very good reason to believe this, because I know they can have no reason to reject them that believe but this one point ; for when once this great gobbet is swallowed down the passage will be so well opened, that all other points of faith either go down with it, or will slip after it without the least straining or grutching. The authority of God himself, speaking in Scripture, will be of no farther consideration to us ; for that we must suppose to be included in the authority of our mother the Church. And whatsoever we shall thenceforward perceive to be the will of our mother, we must without all scruple conclude it to be also the will of our Father. The Representer hath lately told us, that though the " Scripture (which is the word of our Heavenly Father) may be the law, yet the mother, the Roman Church, is the judge. Having learned from her the sense of the Scripture, we are obliged to submit to this, and never presume on our own private sentiments, however seemingly grounded on reason and Scripture, to believe or

preach any new doctrine opposite to the belief of the Church." And there is reason for this, if it be true which he elsewhere tells us,* "That a man may very easily frame as many creeds as he pleases, and make Christ and his Apostles speak what shall be most agreeable to his humour,† and suit best with his interest, and find plain proofs for all (he means in Scripture); the truth whereof (as of all other points of doctrine) stands," as he saith, "upon the same foundation of the Church's tradition, which, if it fail in one, leaves no security in any." This is indeed to advance the Church to the very top-branch of all authority, and to make the holy Scripture as a very nose of wax, and as leaden a rule as any of that Church ever thought it: seeing a man may form and work it into creeds of all fashions, and find plain proofs in it for any odd humour, or carnal and worldly interest. This then, as far as I can learn by him, is the only way for me to be a thorough Papist and a good Catholic, I must lay aside my reason and the Scripture, and heed no more what either of these tell me; only I must have my ear open to the voice of the Church, and be wholly at her teaching and command, and I shall be safe enough.

Upon the most serious consideration of the character which the Papist is pleased to give us of himself, I cannot find what it is for which they of that Church are so severely bent against us Protestants; save only, that we will not, like tame animals, without any understanding of our own, learn to come and go at a whistle, or trot on the road as we are driven, and stoop to take on our backs whatever load it shall please the Roman Church to lay upon us, confessing her to have absolute and uncontrollable authority over our faith. "The standing out against the catholic Church makes men heretics, and without erring against this no man is guilty of heresy," said the Jesuit Fisher, in his answer to certain questions propounded to him by King James I. This then is the only heresy, to disown the authority of the Roman (for that he calls the catholic) Church. "Again," saith he, "one fundamental error of the Protestants is their denying the primacy of St. Peter and his successors, the foundation which Christ laid of his Church, necessary for the perpetual government thereof." And again: "He that forsakes the Church puts himself into a dead and damnable state, and may have all things besides salvation and eternal life."

* Pap. Repr. p. 35.

† Ibid. p. 37, 38.

Bellarmino* speaks out, and tells very plainly, "No man can, though he would, be subject to Christ, and communicate with the celestial Church, that is not subject to the Pope." If then we believe this authority of the Roman Church, we believe all; and if we believe not this, we believe nothing at all, in the Papists' account; or to any better purpose than to our own damnation. So that without this belief our faith shall never pass for an entire faith; and when we once believe this it shall never be any more questioned, whether it be entire or no.

Now it seems a very hard matter to believe this great point of faith till very good reasons be given us for it; and yet, it should seem the want of such reasons will not excuse us from being heretics, and in a state of damnation, no not though we be never so ready to believe it, when we have reasons given us for it. "For he is an heretic," we are told,† "who thinks any thing against the definition of the Church; yet stands so affected, that he will think the contrary if he be convinced by arguments, or if the matter be propounded to him by a learned man." And on the contrary, if we do believe this, we can hardly be heretics, whatever errors we believe, or this belief draws us into. For, "if a rustic," saith Cardinal Tolet, "believe his bishop about the articles of faith, teaching him some heretical doctrine, he merits by believing, although it be an error."‡ So weighty a point is this, of believing the authority of the Roman Church, and grounding our entire faith upon it, that I perceive I am concerned above all things to examine it thoroughly: and this I shall have fitter opportunity to do, now I am come to the second thing propounded.

SECT. II.

Hitherto I have been considering, "What ground I have to hope for salvation, as I am a Protestant, and of the Church of England." I am now in the next place to inquire, "Whether I can find any reason to believe that the Church of Rome can put me into a more hopeful way to it, should I turn Papist, and be of her communion." Now seeing I have already found, that the great reason why we are held uncapable of salvation as now we are, is this, "that we have no entire faith," and the

* Bellarm. de Eccles. l. 3. c. 5. [vol. 2. p. 70. col. 1. Prag. 1721.]

† Bonacin. de Censur. D. 2. q. 5. p. 1. from Vasquez and others.

‡ Tol. Instruct. Sacerd. l. 4. c. 3. [p. 382. col. 2. Col. Agr.]

defect of our faith is this, "that we believe not all the articles of the Roman faith ;" and that which makes it necessary for us to believe all those articles, is the authority of the Catholic, that is, as they interpret, the Roman Church, to declare and define what things are necessary to the salvation of Christians ; I perceive I have no more to do for my full satisfaction in the present inquiry, but to consider what reason I can have for the owning and submitting to this authority. And to discern this, I think this method fittest to be taken. I will inquire into three things :

I. *What things are implied in that submission to this authority, which is required of me.*

II. *What the grounds and reasons are whereon this authority is founded, and which should persuade me to submit.*

III. *Where this authority may be found, and to whom I must submit.*

And this is all, I think, that I need to do, for I can never think fit to submit my faith and conscience, and to trust my salvation to an authority, which either requires of me such things as are unreasonable, or can produce no reason for itself, or is so lodged in obscurity, as it cannot be found.

I. I cannot leave the communion of the Church of England, and enter into that of Rome, in obedience to an authority which commands me to do things unreasonable, agreeing neither with the nature of mankind, nor with the undoubted principles of religion. If therefore the Church of Rome require such things of me, I must be a Protestant still, and protest against that authority which she pretends to. And for ought I can yet see, I cannot submit to her authority, but upon the hardest and most unreasonable terms in the world. I must renounce my reason and my judgment ; I must no longer trust my senses, I must either lay aside, or learn to speak dishonourably of God's word ; I must not believe a word that God hath spoken, without that Church's leave ; I must embrace a religion, for which, according to that Church's principle, no reason can be given to convince me ; and when I have thus learned to do all things without reason, I must do, what with reason I can never do, believe all men whatsoever, and how piously soever they otherwise live, if they be not of the Roman communion, to be in a state of damnation. If I be deceived in anything of all this, I shall be very glad to know it ; and I have only this to say for myself, that they were Roman Catholics, who should

know their own religion best, that have deceived me: and if I may be deceived by hearkening to them, whom that Church sends abroad to make us converts, I shall be the less encouraged hereafter to embrace her communion upon their persuasions. Whether all, who are already of her communion, either own or know all this, it concerns not me to inquire; but I think it a debt of charity, that I owe them, to think (till they tell me the contrary) that they do not, and that, if they did, they would not long continue where they are. However, till they, who taught me these things, shall either confess their own error, or shew me my mistake, I must needs think them all true, and therefore also account it much safer for me to continue a Protestant than to turn Papist, whatever it may seem or be to others.

First, I think nothing can be plainer, than that it is more safe to act like understanding, and discreet, considering men, than otherwise; or, that the religion, which alloweth men so to do, is safer than that which doth not allow it. Now the Protestant religion alloweth men to make use of their reason and judgment, to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, which the Roman religion (as it seems to me) will not allow, and therefore it must needs be the safer religion.

Christ certainly came not into the world to save sinners by destroying, but rather by restoring and perfecting human nature. His business was not to deprive us of the use of the most noble faculty which God had given us, but to rectify that, and all the rest, after they had been depraved by sin. His Gospel was not preached to close up the eye of the soul, the understanding, and so to lead men blindfold to heaven; but to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light," Acts xxvi. 18. The Apostle preached, to teach us how to offer unto God a "reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. And Christ expects, that "his sheep should be able to discern the voice of him their Shepherd from the voice of strangers; and avoiding them, to follow him only," John x. 4, 5. St. Peter exhorts men "to be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in them," 1 Pet. iii. 15. And St. Paul bids men "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good," 1 Thess. v. 21. And St. John exhorts, "not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God," 1 John iv. 1. How any man shall be able to do all this, and much more, which as a Christian he is obliged to do, and not be allowed the free use of his reason and judging faculty, I am sure no man can tell

me, neither indeed how he can be of any religion at all; for before he can be of any religion, he must choose it, and choose it he cannot, till he have rationally considered and judged of it, and of the reasons which must move him to the choice of it. And in truth, to deny a man the free use of his reason and judgment in religion, is to turn him into a beast, where he should be most a man; and either to make it impossible for him to be of any religion at all, and to serve God like a man, or else to say in effect, that the Christian religion is altogether a most unreasonable thing, and proper only to unreasonable creatures.

Now the writing men of the Roman Church tell us nothing more frequently, than that no private man ought to be allowed to judge for himself in matters of faith; that to allow this, is to set the gate wide open to all heresies; that every man is bound to submit and captivate his understanding and judgment to the judgment of the Church, that is, to all the definitions of (as they call it) the Roman Catholic Church. Whatsoever this Church affirms, we must believe to be true; and whatsoever she commands, we must cheerfully obey, seem the thing to our own private reason never so false or never so wicked. We must not dare to examine the truth or lawfulness of her decrees or determinations, though reason and Scripture too seem to us to be against them, as we have been lately taught by the Representer; for as we receive from her the books, so from her only we are to receive the sense of Scripture. Hence it is, that they define a heretic to be one that obstinately opposeth the sentence of the Church. The doctrines of Fathers (Bellarmine somewhere tells us) may be examined by reason, because they teach but as private doctors; but the Church teaches as a judge, with all authority, and therefore no man may dispute the soundness of her doctrine. This then is the first step I must take, if I will go over to the Church of Rome; I must resolve to see no longer for myself with my own eyes, but give myself up to be led by the Church, never questioning the way I am to go in, so long as she leads me. And truly, so far as I am yet able to discern with my Protestant eyes, it is but needful to close the eye of reason beforehand, when I am about to go, where I must otherwise see such things as no reason can indure. It was therefore very ingenuously spoken (as I have heard) of Mr. Cressy, when he said, "that the wit and judgment of Catholics, is to renounce their own judgment and depose their own wit." Yet if this be true,

I must beg his pardon, if I dare not yet imitate his example, or follow him thither, where (according to him) I can have nothing to do, but to run headlong upon anything without wit or fear. Reason he is pleased to call a hoodwinked guide ; and following it, all we can hope for is that we may possibly stumble into the truth or Church. Possibly (it should seem) a man may stumble upon it with his eyes in his head ; and truly, I dare not pull them out, lest I should stumble on a blind leader, and we should both fall into the ditch.

Secondly, Whosoever I resolve to enter into the Roman communion, I fear I must also bid farewell to my senses, or resolve never any more to trust them, no, not about those things which are the proper objects of sense, to discern which God gave me my senses, and of which it will be impossible for me to have any distinct knowledge without them.

How unreasonable and dangerous a thing this is, I must needs be very sensible, if I be not resolved already to hearken no more to my reason. If I must no longer credit my eyes about shape and colour, nor my ears about sounds and words, nor my nose about smells, nor my palate concerning taste, nor my hands and feeling about hot and cold, hard and soft ; I shall not know how to believe that God gave me all these instruments of sense to any purpose at all ; I am sure I cannot think myself in a comfortable and safe condition. I know not to what end our blessed Saviour should bid St. Thomas handle and see him ; or how his faith could be thereby confirmed, if such senses are not to be trusted : nor why the Apostles should hope to have the more credit given to their narratives, by telling us “they were eye-witnesses of the things they relate,” 2 Pet. i. 16. Luke i. 2. Nor why St. John (1 John i. 1.) should talk so much of “hearing, seeing, and handling,” as things qualifying them for bearing witness. What a Christian am I like to be, if I can have no assurance of what I see or hear, if I may not trust my eyes when I read the Scriptures, nor my ears when I hear the instructions of my teachers ? How could the first Christians be sure themselves, or assure us, “that Jesus is the Christ,” if in hearing his words, and seeing his miracles, and reading the prophets, they might not safely trust their senses ? If sense be not to be trusted, all teaching must be by immediate inspiration ; and faith comes not by hearing, as St. Paul affirms it doth ; and the infallible Church can teach no more than we, except she can teach without speaking or writing, or anything that is to be under-

stood by hearing or seeing ; and so oral and practical tradition can be of no more use to us, than to the blind and deaf. On this supposition, I may easily mistake a harlot for my mother, and stumble into Babylon instead of Jerusalem, hearken to the voice of the wolf instead of the shepherd, and eat and drink poison instead of wholesome food, and feel no pain nor loss when my eyes are plucked out.

Now if the Church of Rome do not command us to renounce all credit to our senses, she cannot command us to give any credit to her doctrine of transubstantiation. And I fear, without our believing this point, she will not admit us to her communion. We believe already a real presence of that which we see not, yet will not this serve, unless we believe also a real absence of that which we both see, handle, taste, and smell. In the holy Sacrament of the eucharist, I am commanded to believe that there is not any bread but flesh, nor wine but blood ; and yet there I see, smell, taste, and feel, both bread and wine, and nothing else. I hear it read, that our blessed Saviour took, blessed, brake, and gave bread and wine ; and of the same he said, "Take, eat, and drink." I hear St. Paul again and again, 1 Cor. xi. 26, 27, 28, speak of "eating and drinking the bread and the cup." And yet I must not trust any of these five senses, but against the clearest evidence and testimony of them all, I must believe, if I can, that there is neither bread nor wine, but that, which neither my senses can discern, nor any reason conceive, nor doth the Scripture anywhere say, the very natural flesh and blood of Christ, under the colour and form, and taste and smell, and all other proper qualities of bread and wine ; and yet neither that colour, nor form, nor taste, nor smell, nor any other accident, which my senses there perceive, are in the flesh and blood, though there is nothing else there for them to be in. That though I break and chew with my teeth what I take and eat, yet I break not nor chew with my teeth the body of Christ ; and yet I take and eat nothing else. If I cannot believe this, I am told that I have not faith enough, and only because I have yet reason and sense too much to be of that communion. This is another step that I must take in going over to the Church of Rome. And when I am gone thus far, I may think it seasonable enough to lay aside the Scripture too : for what good use I can make of it, without the free use of my reason, and trusting my senses, I do not understand.

Thirdly, if I be a layman, and not of so good credit with

the curate or bishop, as to obtain a license ; that is, if I will not promise to adhere only to the doctrine of the Roman Church, and take all that I read in that sense only which she is pleased to give it ; I must not be suffered to read the Scripture at all, but must give away my Bible, upon pain of being denied the remission of my sins. And truly if I may be allowed to read it upon no other terms, than of being thus tied up, to learn nothing by it, but what I am before-hand taught without it, I shall think a license too dear, even at a very low rate : if yet it may be obtained, as I find it questioned whether it may or no, any where else, but in such places as a license to read some of their own, may prevent their itch of looking into our translations. However, whether I be of the laity or clergy, if I will learn of them who are most busy in endeavouring my conversion, I am sure I must be taught to speak very dishonourably of the Word of God ; and this seems to be no more than the religion commanded to me requireth.

I must needs here say, that nothing in the world doth (and I think I may say, ought) more to prejudice me against any religion, than to find it constrained in its own defence to say undecent things of that which it grants to be the Word of God. And if I might be thought worthy to advise the missionaries, they should not harp too much on this ungrateful string, if they would draw any after them that have the least zeal for God's honour. I am verily persuaded, that the good language they bestow upon the Scripture, hath kept more out of their Church, than ever their arguments yet won. I will not now take notice of those too well known encumbrances bestowed upon it, by some of their communion, calling it a nose of wax, a leaden rule, a dead letter, unsensed characters, and I am ashamed to say what more. I shall only observe what is ordinarily taught us, and endeavoured with much art to be proved by their best, most modest, and generally approved authors : as, that the Scripture is not necessary ; that it hath no authority as to us, but from the Church ; that it is an imperfect, an insufficient rule ; that it is an obscure book, and finally, a very dangerous one to be read by the people.

I know very well, that the Representer, and others of them tell us, " that the Papist believes it damnable in any one, to think, speak, or to do anything irreverently towards the Scripture, and that he holds it in the highest veneration of all men living." I know also, that most of them, even whilst they are

industriously proving all that I but now said, do yet labour to mollify and sweeten their own harsh expressions, which they know must needs grate the ears of all pious persons. I am also verily persuaded, that many Papists have a venerable esteem for the Scripture, and are not a little troubled to hear it reprooffully used. And yet I cannot see that highest veneration for it, or that they speak not very irreverently of it, who speak no worse of it, than the Representer himself hath taught them, *viz.* "That it is not fit to be read generally of all without license;" though he gives this very good reason for it, "lest they should no longer acknowledge the authority of the Roman Church," or, in his own words, "no authority left by Christ, to which they are to submit." As though men might be taught by the Scripture to be disobedient to any authority which Christ hath set up in his Church. I cannot see any great veneration he hath to the Scripture, in saying, "they allow a restraint upon the reading of the Scriptures, for the preventing of a blind ignorant presumption, or the casting of holy to dogs, or pearls to swine" (such too is his respect for Christians); "that he hath no other assurance that they are the Word of God, but by the authority and canon of the Church: that almost every text of the Bible, and even those that concern the most essential and fundamental points of the Christian religion, may be interpreted several ways, and made to signify things contrary to one another: that it is altogether silent, without discovering which of all those senses is that intended by the Holy Ghost, and leading to truth; and which are erroneous and antichristian: that man may frame as many Creeds as he pleases, and make Christ and his Apostles speak what shall be most agreeable to his humour, and suit best with his interest, and find plain proofs for all: that it alone can be no rule of faith to any private or particular person." Certainly they who talk of the Scripture at this rate, have not the highest veneration for it of all men living.

They that say, and labour to prove, that the Scripture is not necessary, may well be supposed to think, that the Church of God might do well enough without it. And though to lessen the odiousness of this assertion, they are forced to confess it is a lie, without the help of some such mental reservation as this; "so that God could not, if he pleased, preserve his truth among men, some other way than by writing it;" yet doth not this speak in the like veneration for the Scripture, as Protestants have, who down-rightly affirm it to be necessary.

And it must needs sound ill to say, that the all-wise God hath been very careful to leave and preserve in his Church an unnecessary thing. Yea, it is altogether as absurd to say, the Scripture is not necessary, because God could, if it had seemed good to Him, have preserved his Church and faith without it ; as it would be to say, that ploughing and sowing, or eating and drinking, are not necessary, because God could, if He pleased, make the ground bring forth without the one, and preserve man's life without the other. Nor can it be imagined, that any man upon this account only, would venture to say, and attempt to prove the Scripture not to be necessary in a sense, wherein no man ever affirmed it ; if he were not so zealously bent upon lessening the esteem which we have for it, that he will choose rather to say nothing to the purpose, and dispute against nobody, than to be silent, and say nothing that sounds ill of it ; and that he thinks it needful for the ends of his Church so to do.

In like manner, when they contend that the authority of the Scripture is from the Church, which is the thing whereof at every turn they are forward enough to mind us ; they are forced again to make some abatements to make it seem a truth. It is true, they say, that considered in itself alone, it hath its authority from God ; whereby they can mean no more, but that God is the author of it ; but in relation to us, it hath its authority from the Church. Now I would fain know, what any man can understand properly by the authority of the Scripture, but its relation to us, or the power it hath to command our faith in it, and obedience to it, as the Word of God. And if it have all this power from the Church, as is confidently affirmed, then though itself be of God, yet all its authority is from the Church ; and it must needs be true, which was said by one of them, "that it is of no more authority than Livy, or *Æsop's Fables*, without the Church's declaration." Thus is the authority of God's Word made to depend upon the authority of men, and all our faith is no more but human faith resting upon human testimony. And if the authority which it hath to oblige us, be from the Church, I would know by what authority it doth oblige the Church ; it is not sure by any authority from her ; for then I see no reason why the Church may not choose whether she will receive it or no ; whilst yet I think, that it is only by the authority of the Scripture, that she can pretend to be a Church, and to have any authority at all. However, this I am sure of, that

they who say the Scripture is to be received for the Church's sake, have not so high a veneration, either for it, or the author of it, as they who say it is to be received for God's sake.

And in the next place, whether we, who say the Scripture is a perfect and sufficient rule of faith and manners, containing all things necessary to salvation ; or they, who say it is but a partial and imperfect rule : we, who say, it is plain and easy to be understood in all things necessary ; or they, who say it is dark and obscure, unable to inform and resolve learners, doubters, and inquirers, and that even in essentials and fundamentals of religion : finally, whether we, who say it ought to be read and studied of all men ; or they, who say it is not needful, yea, dangerous to be read of all, have the higher veneration for the holy Scripture, is no hard matter to determine ; if to commend a thing, may be said to be more honour to it, than to disparage it. And though here again, they use some art and colour to set off such ill-favoured sayings, as well as they can, yet serves this to no other end, in my mind, but to make them more ugly and odious.

They deny not, for all this, they say, the perfection, sufficiency, or plainness of the Scripture, nor that it may be read by the people. What then is it they say ? They affirm, that it contains all necessary truths, either explicitly, or at least virtually ; for some truths it declares expressly, and yet so, as the Church alone must give the sense ; and for all the rest, it plainly (if the Church may here also give the sense) sends us to the Church to learn them. Now I cannot for my heart imagine what all this can signify, but only a desire to lessen the Scripture's authority, as plausibly as they can. To me it seems very plain, that they make the Scripture just nothing, and the Church all in all.

I think it here again well deserves my consideration, that the Scripture is very copious in declaring and repeating too, over and over again, many necessary points of faith and duty ; and not only necessary things, but many other things it largely teacheth, which are by all granted to be of less moment and necessity to the salvation of men ; and all this it doth in as plain words and phrases as can be used. And hence I find it very hard for me to believe, that the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration it was written, should do all this for our instruction, and that in a book written on purpose to make us wise unto salvation, and by himself declared able so to do, and yet omit many things of greatest necessity to that end ; never so much

as once, no, not in any obscure manner, pointing out to us that Church, to whose authority we must resort and submit. This were to leave us a treasure closely locked up, and not tell us where we may find the key that can let us into it, and so we are neither the wiser nor the richer for it.

Whatsoever the Papists are pleased to allege for their speaking thus of the Word of the blessed God, I confess I cannot think any better of their religion for it. Let us say what we will in commendation of holy Scripture, they will be sure to find something to say against it; lest, I suppose, it should be thought, we can at any time speak truth. And when we charge them for speaking dishonourably of the Scripture, they so interpret their words, as they seem to say the same that we did, and which they blamed us for. What can be their meaning in this, but either to make the world believe that we are in an error; though when they come to apologise for themselves, they are forced to confess it a truth; or that their religion necessarily requires it of them in its vindication, to vilify the Scripture; though by saying such things of it, as they acknowledge cannot be true, unless interpreted so as to speak our sense? They must therefore in this, deal either very disingenuously with us, or very injuriously with the holy Scripture. For my part, I cannot believe, that men professing the Christian faith, and owning the Scripture to be the Word of God, could ever be persuaded to speak so, as but seemingly to vilify or disparage it, if their doctrines could be any other way defended. Their religion, I say, must need it, or they too little consult the honour of their religion, in needlessly uttering such speeches, as stand in need of a very great measure of charity, to think them less than blasphemy.

Fourthly, If any Protestant dares venture thus far towards the Church of Rome, the next thing he has to do, is to resolve not to believe one word that God speaks without that Church's leave. I am confident, that there are not many of our lay-papists that think themselves to be under this obligation; and that if they were sensible of it, they would make haste to break loose from it. But for my own part, I see not how I can enter into their communion, but I must draw it upon myself. And this, I think, would be to advance the Roman Church to as great a height in my esteem, as they in her who are most zealous for her infallibility, can desire. What more would they have, than that God himself, where they confess He speaks, should stand to their Church's cour-

tesy, whether or no He should be believed? I know it will be said, they never disallowed any man to believe God: but because all men cannot understand God speaking in the Scripture, the Church is appointed by Him to be his interpreter. This I hear, and to me it sounds not well, that God should speak to men things necessary for all to know, and which He commands all to learn and believe upon pain of eternal damnation: and yet not speak so intelligibly as they may understand him. Certainly, he that made the tongue, and gave man understanding, can speak, if he please, as intelligibly as the Church, which cannot speak or understand at all without his help and teaching. And considering his infinite goodness and impartiality, till he shall tell me so himself, I know not how to believe that he hath so much more respect to the honour of the Roman Church, than to the salvation of mankind, that he would so deliver things belonging to salvation, that no man can be able to understand, and be the better for them, but he that resorts to that Church as God's sole interpreter. And if indeed she be so, it must follow, that we cannot believe one word that God speaks without her leave. For, therefore is she made God's interpreter, because otherwise we cannot understand his word; and I am sure, what we cannot understand we cannot believe. It is the sense, they say, and not the letter, is God's word; and this sense is in the Church's breast, and of her alone we must learn it; and therefore, till she give us leave, we cannot believe it, no not so much as that Jesus is the Christ; although, till we believe this, we cannot believe that he hath a Church, and therefore cannot believe she is his interpreter.

I will not now inquire into the reasons, why this Church, which is God's sole interpreter, takes so excellent a course to make her children understand God's word. Why, first, she keeps it in the Latin tongue only, whereof the far greater number of them understand not one syllable. Why, 2dly, She doth not give them some infallible translation, interpretation, or comment of the Scripture, a thing very easy for an infallible interpreter to do; and therefore, in my opinion, must argue a great defect in her charity, and much unfaithfulness in the discharge of her trust, if she do it not. I am loth to ask such questions as these, because I find it goes so much against the hair to answer them. Indeed I think she doth not the latter for a very good reason, because she cannot; and it is only her vain pretence to such a power, that makes

her inexcusable if she do it not. And the former she is concerned to do, that they who have the word of God only in a language which they cannot understand, may be constrained of necessity to depend upon her instruction, and never to question her authority, nor discern her errors. Whilst they have nothing of the word of God, but from her mouth, they can have no more of it, than what she gives them leave to have ; and therefore can neither believe a word of what God speaks, nor indeed that he hath spoken anything but by her leave.

God speaks very plainly, and intelligibly enough in the second Commandment, forbidding the adoration of images as plainly as he forbids to commit adultery, or to steal. And Christ spake very plainly, and as intelligibly saying, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matth. iv. 10. And again, when he said of the eucharistical cup, "Drink ye all of it," Matth. xxvi. 27 ; and when he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." St. Paul very plainly ordereth, that the public worship of God be performed in a known tongue, and sheweth the great absurdity of using an unknown tongue in God's worship, 1 Cor. xiv. And he speaks intelligibly enough, when he saith, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup," 1 Cor. xi. 28. To say no more, we think it plainly enough said, of them "that die in the Lord, that they rest from their labours," Rev. xiv. 13. In all these things, we hear God speak, and would fain believe him. But here the Church of Rome comes in with her authority and tells us, that though God have said, He only is to be worshipped, we must believe, that not He only, but also the cross, images, saints, and angels, are to have a share in our religious worship. And say Christ and his Apostles what they please to the contrary, we must believe, that not all, but the sacrificing priest ought to drink of the cup ; that God's public worship is well performed in an unknown tongue ; that we neither eat bread nor drink wine in the eucharist ; that all who die in the Lord do not rest from their labours, but that the most of them go into most dreadful torments. At this rate, for ought I can see, must I believe the word of God, when I have once submitted to the authority of the Church of Rome.

Fifthly, It seems very hard for me to conceive how I should be bound under penalty of eternal damnation, to espouse a

religion, and submit to an authority, for which no convincing reason can be given me by them that invite me to it. What is it in any religion, which can commend it before others to a man's choice, but its truth and goodness? And how should the truth and goodness of any religion commend it to my choice, till they be discovered unto me, and I be rationally convinced that it hath them? Whatever truth and goodness there may really be in the religion called Popery, I am sure there can be no motives to me to embrace it, till they be clearly laid open to my understanding and judgment, that I may plainly discern them; and therefore, if any Papist will take an effectual course to convert me to it, he must by rational means convince me first, that his is the true Church and her doctrines sound and good.

How he can do this upon his own principles, I see not yet; but rather think it a very gross absurdity in him to attempt it. He tells me often, that no private person, such as I am, ought to judge for himself in points of faith, or therein to follow his own private judgment, though to him grounded both on reason and Scripture. He must not therefore, in disputing with me, according to his own doctrine, bring either reason or Scripture to convince me, for I must not trust my own private judgment (and I know no other that I have), though, as it seems to me, grounded both on reason and Scripture. I must not judge for myself by either of them, whether what he commends to me by them be true or no, and then I cannot imagine to what end he useth them in any dispute with me. He must resolve therefore, for ought I can see, whenever he would convert me, to judge for me too, as well as dispute with me; and then if I cannot make a right choice for myself, he may do it for me; though after all, whether his private judgment be any more to be trusted in such a case, than my own, I may possibly doubt.

Either it is a matter of faith, that the Church of Rome is the only true Church, and that she hath this authority of determining for all Christians, which is the saving faith of Christ, or it is not. If it be not, I may be safe enough, though I believe it not; and it is ill done of Papists to terrify me with these big words, which are as false as terrible, "That I cannot be saved without believing this." If it be a matter of faith, then must I either be allowed to judge for myself, by my own private judgment in a matter of faith, or all the Papists' endeavours to persuade me to believe it, are altogether vain, unless it be reasonable for me to believe a thing against

my reason and judgment. When he useth arguments, I should think he meant thereby to convince me in my private judgment ; but it seems, it is only to drive me out of it ; and that, if I may use it at all, it is only to this end, that I may conclude I have no use of it. All the arguments in the world cannot convince me, till I judge of them ; and therefore no Papist can offer me a reason why I should embrace Popery, but he must contradict himself, and give me as strong a reason why I should not embrace it, because its principles are false. It will be all one, as if he should say, I ought to be convinced by reason, and yet I neither ought nor can be convinced by it. In urging his reasons upon me, he intends they should convince me ; in denying me the liberty of judging for myself by reason, he denies that any reasons can convince me ; because it is plain they cannot convince me before I have judged of them, and this I must do by my private judgment, or by nothing, for I have no other.

But here I am told, “ We are allowed to make use of our reason to find out the true Church, which may infallibly guide us into all saving truth.” All that is required of us, is this, that when we have once found this true Church, we presume no longer to judge for ourselves, but captivate our reason to the infallible judgment of the Church. This is something, and yet it seems but extorted from them, to make a little more plausible, what to me seems one of the greatest pieces of folly in the world ; I mean, the attempt of convincing men by reason, who must not be allowed to judge of the reasons whereby they must be convinced. I find reason, by a traditional Papist, compared to “ a dim-sighted man, who used his reason to find a trusty friend to lead him in the twilight, and then relied on his guidance rationally, without using his own reason at all about the way itself.” Thus are we allowed reason to find out the Church of Rome, our sure friend to guide us, and on whose guidance we must rationally rely, after we have captivated our reason to her, and for her sake have resolved to use it no more. But now, if this reason, which is to direct us to our guide, be such a dim-sighted thing, and as we heard before, hood-winked too, so that whilst we follow it, we can have no more hope, than only that we may possibly stumble into the Catholic Church ; who will secure us, that we shall not in this twilight mistake a treacherous enemy for a trusty friend ; and then, what shall we gain by our rational reliance on him ? A dim-sighted man in the

twilight, may easily mistake one thing for another, else should he not much need a trusty guide ; and why he may not mistake his guide, as well as his way, I do not yet know.

But that I may be satisfied, how much I gain by this liberal concession, to use my reason and private judgment in inquiring after the true Church ; I will a little consider, how the Papist is wont to talk with me, when he would persuade me to take his Church for my only sure guide. First he tells me, "There is but one true faith ;" and then, "that this faith must be held entirely ;" next, "that this entire faith is no where to be found but in the true Church." After this he begins again, and tells me, "Christ hath a Church upon earth ; that there is but one true Church ; that out of it there is no salvation ;" and lastly, "that the Roman Church, and no other, is that one true Church out of which there is no salvation." And till we have found that it is so, he will give us leave to judge for ourselves. And I would thank him for this kindness, if he would allow me to enjoy the benefit of it, and to make any use of it ; otherwise it will look but like a mockery. I desire therefore, some clear convincing evidence, that the Roman Church is the only true Church. He cannot to this purpose produce the consent of all Christians, for two parts in three deny it. Therefore he gives me a great many marks or signs, sometimes more, sometimes fewer, whereby the only true Church must be known from others, and spends a great many words in shewing me how they agree to the Roman Church, and no other. That wherein I would next have some satisfaction, is, supposing that all the marks agree to the Roman Church, and no other ; how am I to know, that these are indeed the certain and incommunicable marks and properties of the only true Church ? To prove this, he betakes himself to the holy Scripture, and bring me thence some texts, whereby he says, they are clearly proved to be so. I now, with a very hearty and sincere desire to learn the truth, and with all diligent use of such helps as I can come by, read and consider all these texts, and cannot discern in them any evidence at all of the thing which they are brought to prove ; and therefore think it reasonable yet to call for some clearer proof. But now when it is come to this, I presently find, that his liberal concession to make use of my reason and private judgment to find out the true Church, amounts to no more than I at first suspected, that is, just nothing : for here he retires to his principle of Popery, "That I, being a private person, ought

not to judge for myself what is the sense of those texts of Scripture, but must submit my reason and judgment to the judgment of the Church (yea, even before I have found the Church), and without any dispute receive the sense of Scripture from her alone." Thus he recalls at once all that he had allowed, and undoes again whatsoever he had been a-doing to persuade me to his communion. He was giving me reasons, which might convince me in my judgment; and these at length resolve all into the authority of the Scripture; and yet of this testimony of the Scripture I must not judge; and therefore by it I cannot be convinced of any thing but this, that the Church of Rome is resolved to be mistress of all Christians; and thinks it enough to convince us that she is so, if while she sets some of her sons to hold us up in empty talk of Scripture and reason to no purpose, she step out from behind the curtain, saying, " Believe it, I am she."

Now I cannot possibly see, whatever others may do (for I keep yet to my Protestant principles of judging for no man but myself), how I can embrace Popery upon any conviction from Papists; and I fear I must either take it without any reason for it, or not at all. If I cannot know the Roman Church to be the only true Church, but by the testimony of the Scripture; and if I cannot understand the testimony of the Scripture, till I receive the true sense of it from the Roman Church; and if I cannot take that for the true sense of it, upon her declaration of it so to be, unless moved by her authority, I must be persuaded to do the most unreasonable thing in the world, to my thinking: to believe a Church to be the only true Church, for her own authority, which I yet know no more than I do her to be the true Church; which, it is all along supposed, I do not know at all: this I think not only unreasonable, but impossible.

I must needs confess myself very hard to be persuaded of the tender goodness of that mother, who, lest her children should get hurt by the dimness of their sight, will needs pull out their eyes, and keep them in her pocket, till she has taught them to use them better. I am very loth to part with my reason, how dim-sighted soever, because I know not how to serve God without it. Yet if I should dare to venture thus far, may I now have leave to take my rest here? If my dim-sighted reason help me to stumble into my mother's lap, may I yet think myself safe there? Not till I have learned her

charity too as well as her faith, which the Representer tells us, "she learned of Christ and his Apostles."

Therefore, lastly, I must believe, that all other Christians but Papists, are in a state of damnation. The decree of Pope Boniface VIII. as it now stands in the common Extravagants, is well known to be this, "We declare, say, define, and pronounce, that it is altogether of necessity to salvation, that every creature be subject to the Pope of Rome." Pope Pius II., in his Bull of Retractation, though he was not altogether of the same mind (as it seems) before, whilst he was *Aeneas Sylvius*, saith, "He cannot be saved that doth not hold the unity of the catholic Church." If so lusty a decree, and so peremptory a declaration of two Popes be too little, there is abundance more to this purpose to be met with, by him that has a mind to search for it: I only take notice at this time, that Pope Leo X., in his Lateran Council, and his bull therein read and passed, saith, "We do renew and approve the same constitution" (*viz.* of Pope Boniface, but now mentioned), "the present sacred Council also approving it." And lastly, Pope Pius IV., in his bull, wherein he confirms the Council of Trent, imposeth an oath upon ecclesiastical persons, wherein they swear, "That the holy Catholic and the Apostolic Roman Church, is the mother and mistress of all Churches; and that this is the true catholic faith, without which no man can be saved." Here is enough in all conscience for us Protestants to hear, and too much a great deal, as I think, for any man to believe.

I think myself bound in charity to have the best opinion I can of all men; and therefore I dare not think, that all they who are called Roman Catholics have thoroughly learned this doctrine. There seems to me to be so much of ill-nature in it, that I should think myself the worst natured man in the world, if I could believe that any considerable numbers of them, besides the priests, are guilty of it. Many piously disposed souls, are not so happy as to have always the clearest understandings, or the sincerest teachers, but have better hearts than either heads or guides. Their zeal is too great for both their opportunities of learning and patience to consider; their earnestness of salvation, a thing very laudable in them, puts them into too much haste to deliberate long, and gives an advantage to some, who watch for it, to abuse them. Either a cunning Jesuit, or a canting fanatic, will hope to make an easy prey of such persons; for it matters not greatly of which sort

the tempter be, whilst the temptation is the same: the fish minds not the fisher, but the bait: every argument from either is edged with a mighty zeal and importunity, and sharpened with the finest and most penetrating expressions of a most tender compassion for perishing souls. Salvation is as confidently promised, as earnestly desired; and whether it be to be had in the Romanist's infallible Church, or the Separatist's purged and unmixed congregation, all is a case, when once the man is made to think it cannot be had in the Church of England. If they who are so easily proselyted either way, would take time to look before they leap, and could but see into the consequents of these very arguments which most prevail with them, and are made the traps to catch them in, they would stand off a little, and ask a few questions more, for their better satisfaction, before they could endure to think of entering into a communion, which would oblige them, as ever they hoped to be saved themselves, to believe that Christ hath no faithful followers upon earth, but a few subjects of the Pope of Rome.

I can easily perceive, by divers books written by them who call themselves converts, that the main motive of their going over to the Roman Chnrch, was this, "That they could not hope to be saved in any other;" and I find that most arguments of late used, to persuade us to that religion, look the very same way; and it is this doctrine alone, that hath put me upon this inquiry for my own satisfaction: for I must needs confess, that this doctrine, which some account so powerful a persuasive to Popery, has always with me had the quite contrary effect to what I find it hath in them; and has been, and is at this present to me, as strong a dissuasive from it. If I can never be a Papist, till I can believe it, I am very confident I shall never be one. I would leave the Church of England the next minute, should she require of me to believe, "that all out of her communion were in a state of damnation;" and truly I think that most Protestants are of my mind.

When, therefore, I found the Representer in good earnest to vindicate his Church in this one point, I presently concluded, that he had writ his whole book to no purpose; for let him spend all his oil and colours in painting Popery to the best advantage, so long as this one spot appears in her face, she may possibly seem in her new dress less terrible, but not one jot more lovely. Having told us, "That no one can arrive to the true knowledge of the catholic faith, but by receiving it as proposed and believed by the Church of Christ; and that

the Roman Catholic is the only true Church ; that whosoever denies any article of her faith, denies so much of Christ's doctrines ; that whosoever hears her, hears Christ ; and whosoever obstinately and wilfully is separated from her, is in the same distance separated from Christ himself ;" and finally, "That God added to this Church daily, such as shall be saved :" he hath told us enough to persuade us, that no Protestant in the world could have done that Church a greater diskindness, than he hath done ; nor by any misrepresentation of her, have worse represented her.

When the Papists are pleased to ask us that unanswerable question, as they account it, "Where was your religion before Luther ?" They wish us withal, to take into our serious consideration, the state of our forefathers, who lived and died in the religion of the Church of Rome ; asking us, if we dare think, that they were all damned : we need not trouble our heads with shaping an answer to so frivolous a question, because we durst never yet be so hardy as to affirm, that all are damned who live and die in the communion of the Church of Rome ; but do openly declare to the world, that though we think our own religion the safest, yet many of that communion have been heretofore, and many also are at this day, under such circumstances, as encourage us to hope very well of them as to their future state. However, if it so well deserve our consideration, what is become of our forefathers ? Doth it not as well deserve the consideration of the Romanists, what is become of many of theirs ? Yea, what will become of the greatest part of the Christian world, who live and die out of their communion ? And if they would have us think the worse of the Reformation, lest by thinking well of it we should be wanting in charity to our fathers, which yet we are by it no way obliged to be ; should it not move them to think the worse of their religion, that it constrains them to think so uncharitably, not only of their fathers, but of all the world but themselves only ?

How many most eminent and worthy persons, how many great and famous Churches, must I be obliged, by embracing the Roman faith, to believe excluded from salvation ? Upon these terms, I cannot see how it is possible for me to be reconciled to the Church of Rome, without professing myself an irreconcileable enemy to all the Christian world besides. I must turn Hector, and call all other Christians damned heretics. I must needs say, this appears not to me like that meek and

lamb-like spirit of the blessed Jesus which is given by him to his dove-like spouse, that thus rants it in his pretended vicars, and their adherents. It seems not to be much a-kin to that Christian charity, which "hopeth and believeth all things, and thinketh no evil," 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

I must make nothing of condemning all Protestants and Protestant Churches, of what other denomination soever; and these alone are no inconsiderable part of Christians: "These heretics," saith Bellarmine, "possess many and ample provinces, England, Scotland," (and why not Ireland?) "Denmark, Swedeland, Norway, no small part of Germany, Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary;" he might have said also, of France and Helvetia. It was anciently the custom, saith Tolet,* that the Pope did three days every year, though now but once a year, *viz.* upon the Holy Thursday (he means the Thursday immediately before Easter, called *Caena Domini*) with great solemnity, before all the people, thunder out his sentence of excommunication against all heretics, of what name or sect soever; but against the Queen of England (which was then Queen Elizabeth) by name; with all their believers, receivers, favourers and defenders; against all that read their books publicly or privately, with what intention soever, or under whatever pretence, though there be no error in them, or with a design to confute the error, if there be any, without his Holiness's license against the keepers, printers, and defenders, in any manner, of the same; against all schismatics, and such as pertinaciously withdraw themselves, and depart from their obedience to the Pope; against any one that shall so much as say, that Calvin was a good man; against all that appeal from the orders, decrees, or mandates of the Pope, to a future Council. And it is very well known, that they are not all Protestants who have done so.

Neither will this suffice, I must also condemn the whole Greek Church, which how ancient, and of how large extent it is, is very well known: and some reason there seems to be for it: "For," saith Bellarmine,† "the Greeks, in the year 441,

* Instr. sacerd. l. 1. c. 18. [p. 51. col. 2. Colon. Agr. The Bull in *Coena Domini* or *Coena Domini* is a collection of whatever was deemed important for maintaining and advancing the Papal power. The Bull grew with the growth of the pretensions of the Papacy, from the time of Boniface VIII. A.D. 1299, till it settled into the shape it has had during the last two centuries and a half. Dens (Theol. Moral. vol. vi. p. 298, Dr. Murray's edition) describes it as annually published at Rome on Maundy Thursday.]

† Praefat. de Rom. Pontif.

in the Council of Chalcedon, consisting of six hundred bishops, endeavoured to make the patriarch of Constantinople equal to the bishop of Rome." And again, "In the year 1054, they pronounced the bishop of Rome to have fallen from his degree of dignity, and the bishop of Constantinople to be the first bishop." And though he pretends that these Greeks were once reconciled to Rome in the Council of Florence, yet he adds, "that they always returned to their vomit." No wonder therefore, if this Greek Church cannot escape damnation: and yet this "poor reprobated Church" yields not to that of Rome in any of her own principal marks of a true Church. I read that the Christians of her communion, in Natolia, Circassia, Mingrelia, Russia, Greece, Macedonia, Epirus, Thracia, Bulgaria, &c. do very near, if not quite, equal the number of those who are of the Roman communion.

And yet will not this be enough, unless we include in this sentence of condemnation, all the Assyrian Christians living among the Mahometans in Babylon, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Parthia, and Media, with the Jacobites, Armenians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and the vast empire of the Habassines: all these I must look upon as cut off from Christ, merely for their disowning the Pope's authority, though they should be found orthodox in all other points. And truly I know not how to get up to that height of boldness, not to be afraid of condemning so many Christians, most of which have given, and do yet give to the world the most notable testimony of fidelity to Christ, that can be expected, in their constant sufferings for the sake of his holy name and Gospel.

After this consideration of whole Churches, it seems needless for me to come down to that of single persons, though confessedly of greatest note and eminence in the Church of Christ, both for learning and piety. How St. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and a famous martyr, who would not obey P. Anicetus, but still keeps his Easter contrary to the custom of the Roman Church, and therein either is ignorant of his duty, or as stubborn as any Protestant: or how his successor in that see, Polycrates, who defended himself and his Church so arrogantly against the authority of the Roman Church, more than sufficiently declared by Pope Victor, still pleading the example of Polycarp, and authority of St. John, as though he had never heard St. Peter was made prince of the Apostles, or that the bishops of Rome were his successors in that authority over all Churches. How Irenaeus, and all his fellow bishops

of the Gallican Church, who so presumptuously took upon them to expostulate the matter with the same Victor, and in very homely terms to chide him for “excommunicating those Asian Christians” for not changing their ancient customs at his command. How St. Cyprian, the holy bishop of Carthage, and martyr, with his bishops of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania, joining with him in so contumaciously resisting Pope Stephen: the sixty bishops in the Milevitan Council; or those two hundred and seventeen bishops, whereof the famous St. Austin was one, who “not only stubbornly rejected the claim,” but also manifestly “demonstrated the fraudulence and forgery of three popes, Zosimus, Boniface, and Celestine,” about appeals to Rome. How all these shall be exempted from this censure, I know not. Did not the later of these African Councils decree, “That the bishop of the first see (meaning Rome) should not be called the prince of priests, or chief priest, or any such thing, but only the bishop of the first see?” Did it not “excommunicate” every priest that should “appeal to Rome?” It seems to me, that St. Athanasius could have no great opinion of the infallibility of Pope Liberius, when, through fear, himself had forgot he had any such thing, and consented with the Arians to the condemnation of that holy Father. St. Jerome seems not to have any thoughts of the Pope’s supremacy, when he said, “that wherever there is a bishop, whether at great Rome, or petty Eugubium, he is of the same merit and priesthood.” Neither did either he or St. Austin seem to have had a just esteem for the Church of Rome’s authority, when they preferred that of the Eastern Church before it, in receiving the Epistle to the Hebrews into the canon of Scripture. Above all, what must I think of their great saint Pope Gregory the First, who called the title of “Universal Bishop a new title,” which none of his predecessors ever used, “a name of vanity, a profane name, wicked, and not to be uttered, yea, a blasphemous saying, that whosoever desired it, shewed himself to be the forerunner of Antichrist.” If I must believe this great Pope and Saint, I know well enough what to think of most of his successors in the infallible chair; if I must not believe him, why must I believe those that succeeded him? Had not he and they one and the same authority as Popes of Rome? Believe both I cannot; and disbelieving either, as all Papists, no less than I, must disbelieve the one, I am no better than a heretic, and incapable of salvation.

Farther yet, I find that the African Council, but now mentioned, did allege for itself the sixth canon of the first General

Council held at Nice, which is this ; " Let the old custom be kept through Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, so that the Bishop of Alexandria have power over all these, because the Bishop of Rome hath also the like custom." By this canon these two bishops seem to be made equal in power. In the fourth General Council held at Chalcedon, and ninth canon, it is ordered, " That if any bishop or clerk have a controversy with the metropolitan of that province, they have recourse to the primate of the diocese, or certainly to the see of the royal city of Constantinople, that the business may be ended there." This Council seems hereby to make the Bishop of Constantinople equal to the Bishop of Rome ; and this it did, notwithstanding great opposition made against it by Pope Leo the First. So that I must involve in the same censure of " condemnation" some of the most famous General Councils that ever were. This I am apt to think a very daring matter, and not rashly to be attempted. I have indeed been taught by our blessed Jesus, that God will not forgive us, if we do not forgive our brethren ; but I do not remember where he hath taught me that God will not save us, except we believe that no man but a Papist can be saved.

II. I have now considered some of the many difficulties I am to struggle with, before I can get through to the Church of Rome. And truly they seem to me, whatever men of more strength and courage may think, little less than insuperable. And yet after all this, if I may be convinced that the authority of the Roman Church hath sufficient grounds of Scripture and reason to support it, I must confess no difficulty in my way ought to dishearten me from breaking through it. But then again, if I must believe that there is such an " uncontrollable power" in the Church, in some one Church, in the Roman Church by name, yea, in the bishop of that Church ; and if I must so believe this, that I must not leave in my soul any room at all for the least charitable thought of any man's salvation, who believes it not : I think it no less than needful, that I have the clearest and most undeniable evidence in the world for what I believe, lest the sentence of " condemnation" should recoil upon myself for my temerity and uncharitableness.

Indeed if this Church may be allowed to bear witness to its own authority, and such a testimony be sufficient, I cannot want it. The Council of Trent hath more than once called her, the mother and mistress of all Churches. So infallible in her judgment and directions, so absolute in her dominion and command she must be, that her " sole authority" must be

warrant enough, and nothing else any warrant without it, for all things that belong to Christian religion. "Whosoever," saith Beccanus in his Compendium, "in matters of faith and religion followeth the true Church of Christ" (which he there proveth to be the Roman Church only), "cannot err about faith and religion, seeing the true Church of Christ is infallible." And this we are told continually, as this Jesuit doth say, "that this is the shortest compendium of all controversies." This then being to support the whole fabric of Popery, had need to stand on firm ground.

This ground I would now fain discover. Why then must we believe that the Roman Church hath this sovereign authority in religion? I must confess myself one of those sturdy heretics, that cannot believe without reason. When I hear that Church telling me she is infallible, and hath all power over all other Churches; I cannot believe it, till I have some better reason for it than this, that she must be all that, which she is pleased to say of herself; and therefore must be infallible and omnipotent too, if she say it. And I am a little troubled to say, that this is all I can get out of her for my satisfaction, lest even Protestants should think I say incredible things of her, and that I have no other design, but to make all the learned men of her communion seem ridiculous, in talking to us as to children, always childishly. But it is not in my power to make their arguments better than they are; nor civil in me to teach them what to say; and I am sure my temporal interest cannot at this time tempt me to oversee the strength of their reasons. The very best reasons I have yet met with, with how much artifice and sophistry soever they are dressed up, amount to no more, nor better, in my opinion, than her own honest word, that is, her own authority and infallibility for proof of her authority and infallibility; and therefore I must either believe them both, before I can believe them, even whilst I am inquiring for a reason why I should believe them, or I must not believe them at all, nor with her consent be saved.

The missionaries tell us, they are willing to undergo any pains or difficulty to rescue us from damning error; and whilst they proceed in this method, I have cause to believe them; for I am confident, to prove their Church hath this authority they contend for, is as great a difficulty as they can meet with. If they should here offer us (what is so much talked of by them) the testimony of the universal Church, there is nothing more plain, than that they do but mock us. For this can be

nothing else but the Church of Rome's testimony for her own authority. It cannot, I say, be any thing else, because the thing they are proving, is, "That she alone is the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church;" and were it any thing else, they would never discover it to us, because they would thereby give us an unanswerable argument against what they would prove her to be; for if they will shew us any other Church or Churches, by the testimony whereof her authority may be proved, we are thereby enabled to prove she is not the "only true Church out of which there is no salvation." What then can this testimony be? Is it that of the first and purest ages of the Church before Popery was brought forth? Not so, to be sure; for Popery was (they say) from the beginning, and glorieth of her antiquity above all things. Is it the testimony of all others in the world that profess Christianity? It cannot be; for all these, if not of her communion, are heretics, and in a state of damnation for denying her authority; and were it possible for them to witness that to be which they deny to be, yet is their testimony invalid, because they confess themselves fallible, and this point of faith cannot stand upon a fallible testimony. By this it is very clear to me, that the testimony of the catholic Church of Christ, if it be produced for the authority of the Church of Rome, can be nothing else but the Church of Rome's own words; and I never doubted, but she hath a good word for herself, any more than I doubt lest it should be thought a good proof of her authority.

I have heard again much talk of universal tradition among the Roman Catholics; but if they allege this for their Church's authority, they give us only the same thing again in other words. Universal tradition can be nothing else but the testimony of the universal Church, and that must be the Church of Rome; and so we are not advanced one step farther than we were before. The credit we are to give unto universal tradition, depends on the authority of the Roman Church, which we have not yet found, but are inquiring after.

If Fathers and Councils be brought in to witness this authority, all the noise they make will prove but the voice of the Roman Church, crying herself up for the "great Diana of the world," and thundering anathema to all that will not fall down and worship her. Will she abide by the testimony of either Father or Council, if they speak not what she has taught them, or against what she holds? or shall they be allowed to overrule the oral and practical tradition of the present Church of Rome? Are Councils of any credit more than the Pope's

confirmation gives them? And are single Fathers of more credit than they? If not, we have yet no more but her own word for her own authority.

If they bring us Scripture to prove this authority, I must say, that as we reverence Fathers and Councils, so we "adore (with Tertullian) the fulness of the Scripture;" neither can we desire any better proof, than its testimony. Yet when I consider how these men use the Scripture, I am at a stand to think, how they can in good earnest produce it as a witness in this matter; for after they have said almost all the ill they can of it, calling it imperfect, insufficient, obscure, unsensed; they seem to ridicule both it and us, when they bring it forth, thus disabled, for a witness. Do not they tell us again and again, that both the canon and the sense of Scripture depend, as to us, on the authority and interpretation of their Church? and can its testimony then possibly amount to any more than that Church's bare word? Do not they deny us a judgment of discretion, whereby we should discern for ourselves, whether it speak for or against their Church's authority? And will they yet produce it to convince us of the authority by which alone we are both to receive and understand it? It cannot be produced to convince us in our judgment, for we are not allowed any use of our judgment in the case. It must be only to convince themselves that we are heretics; and I dare say, that may be done without the Scripture, as well as with it, whilst their Church must give the sense of it.

But because they know we magnify it, they will produce it, though I cannot see to what other end, than to persuade us to take heed of trusting too much to it, or thinking it worth any thing, after it hath shewed us the true Church. It must be believed no longer than it is authorised to speak by that authority, which is to be proved by it; so that by shewing us that authority, it loseth all its own authority for ever. "For this," saith Stapleton,* "that God hath commanded us to believe the Church, we do not hang our faith on the authority of the Church, as upon the proper and sole cause of this belief, but partly on manifest Scriptures, by which we are remitted to the teaching of the Church, partly on the Creed," &c. This then is the end of producing the Scripture, that we may be convinced by it, that we are no longer to learn of it, after we are once brought by it to the knowledge of the Church's authority, but thenceforward are to depend wholly

* Stapleton. Tripl. c. 15. [Op. vol. 1. p. 1230. Lut. Par. 1620.]

upon the teaching of the Church, unto which it remits us. All the use then that we have of the Scripture, is to be guided by it to the Church of Rome (though it cannot do so much for us neither, but as that Church guides it); and having thanked it for its kindness, we are then to bid it good night.

Now seeing manifest Scriptures are promised us, to guide us to the Roman Church, I think it reasonable to expect, that they produce such Scriptures as are more manifest to us, than their Church's authority, which is to be proved by them; seeing it is by their evidence I am to be convinced of that, which as yet is unevident to me. Neither ought the sense of these manifest Scriptures to depend upon the interpretation or authority of that Church, the authority whereof they are brought to prove, as a thing to me not yet evident; for so I shall be still but where I was before; and instead of manifest Scriptures, be shuffled off with the Church's bare word; I mean, with such interpretations of Scripture as I have no reason to receive, but by that authority whereof I am yet, at least, in doubt.

Now, that there are indeed no such manifest Scriptures, I am reasonably well assured beforehand. I have read the Scripture over and over, and find not the least mention therein made of this authority of the Roman Church. The Pope of Rome, or his supremacy, is never once named from the beginning of the Bible to the end; nor can I meet with one syllable touching either the infallibility or jurisdiction of him, or his Councils, or of any kind of subjection due to either, from all Christians. I cannot so much as find there, that ever there was any bishop of Rome, or that there should be any there afterwards, much less that all Christians are to own that bishop for their head, and Christ's vicar. And finding nothing of all this, I must needs wonder how manifest Scripture should be produced, to prove this supreme authority over all Churches. And yet, if there be such an authority, and if it be so necessary for all Christians to believe it, and submit to it; I cannot but think that it ought to have been as manifestly declared in Scripture, as any other point whatsoever. St. Peter, in whom this authority is said to have been first settled, saith not a word of it in his Epistles. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, who should in all reason have been best acquainted with it, says nothing at all of it. To the civil magistrate, which the Church of Rome makes to be much inferior to the Church in authority, they both teach us our duty; and strange it is, if they knew of any such thing, that

they should not as plainly instruct us in our duty to the Pope, or Church of Rome, wherein our salvation, the main thing they were to take care for, is so deeply concerned.

But what are these manifest Scriptures at length? I find our blessed Saviour saying to St. Peter, Matth. xvi. 18, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," &c. But I find not that all this, whatever it may signify, was manifestly said to the bishops of Rome. "The plain and obvious sense," saith Bellarmine,* "of these words is, that we may understand the primacy of the whole Church to be promised to St. Peter under two metaphors." And yet, by all the light that he is able to afford me, I cannot discern in these words, whatever was promised to St. Peter, the supremacy, much less the monarchy of the bishop of Rome over all Churches. And it is no wonder if a Protestant heretic be so blind, when such eminent persons as Origen, St. Austin, St. Hilary, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Cyril, could no more see it than I, as the learned Cardinal himself there confesseth. Nay, here is not a word to assure us, that this rock must needs be a monarchy invested with a supremacy of power over the whole Church, or that this monarch must needs be the bishop of Rome, or that "the gates of hell shall never prevail against" the Roman Church; for all this, we must be beholden to that Church's own word, or we shall never find it in this place.

I find again, that Christ commanded St. Peter (John xxi. 16.) "to feed his sheep and his lambs;" as indeed it is the duty of all pastors of the Church to do; and both St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 2.) and St. Paul (Acts xx. 28.) tell us as much; and so much the apter am I to doubt, whether the Pope be so much as a good pastor of Christ's sheep, or no, seeing he takes so little care to feed, and so much to fleece them. I am sure I read of no more but of "one chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls," which St. Peter tells us is Christ himself, 1 Pet. ii. 25. The Apostles were all shepherds under Him; but where is this manifest Scripture to shew that St. Peter was made head shepherd, with commission to feed and rule too, not only the sheep, but the shepherds also? But especially, where is the commission given to the bishops of Rome successively for ever, "to govern the whole flock of Christ with sovereign authority?" Feed the whole, I am sure he neither doth nor can.

* De Rom. Pont. 1. 1. c. 10.

Many great and wonderful things (as Bellarmine tells us) are said of St. Peter in the holy Scripture, and very deservedly ; for he was a very great and eminent Apostle. But the Scripture never saith, that he was a great monarch, nor that he was bishop of Rome, nor that he had a throne, or but a chair there ; and least of all, that this imaginary monarchy was to descend unto the next bishop of Rome, and to his successors for ever ; and that St. John, who long out-lived St. Peter, became thereby subject to some of those bishops, which did not well suit with the dignity of an Apostle.

I read those words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 21 : “ The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you.” But that the Pope is the head, and all christian kings, as well as others, the feet, I may possibly read in some such Jesuit as Bellarmine ; but I sure I shall never read it in the Scripture.

Many more such parcels of Scripture as these, they give us ; but after the most serious perusal of them all, I profess I cannot find anything like manifest Scripture for the authority of the Roman Church. And therefore it seems yet as plain to me, as that two and three make five, that the bare word of that Church, without any kind of solid proof, is all that she hath to shew for her authority. She says great things of herself, and talks sometimes of Scripture, but much more of Fathers and Councils, and universal tradition, and indeed every thing that is venerable ; but when all is spelled and put together, it is but the oral and practical tradition of the present Church, that is, her own very confident asseveration.

If we have a little Scripture for fashion’s sake, we must take it as she hath taught it to speak in her own vulgar Latin, which the Council of Trent was even then pleased to make the only authentic translation, when it was confessedly very faulty, and hath been since that divers times corrected. And then we must take it in her own sense too, though we know not well where we may be sure to find it. Her private doctors she will not allow us to trust for it, nor indeed do we find them any better agreed about it than others are, only they have for the most part either the modesty or cunning to refer all to the judgment of the mother-church, could they but tell us where to find it ; for she is loth, once for all, in some public comment, or exposition of the Scripture, to tell us what it is. If we may be allowed to hear the “ testimony of the Fathers,” she must stand at their elbows, and prompt them what to say ; we must have them in her own approved editions ; and if they

have been at school long enough in the Vatican, or some religious house, it is probable they were reasonably well instructed in her own language, before they were allowed to go abroad again. However, before they pass the press, an Expurgatory Index can teach them either to speak, or to be silent, as she thinks most seasonable. Councils may be heard, but only such as have his Holiness's stamp upon them ; and how we can understand them any better than the Scripture, till he interprets for us, is hard to say. So that all returns to this still, that we have her honest word for her authority ; and this is the sole foundation, that I can discover, of this prodigious faith, which we must all have, or else perish eternally.

III. And now, in the last place, seeing it is come to this, for ought I see, that I must rest upon her own word, or nothing, for the truth of her sovereign authority, and must upon peril of my own damnation, take upon me this invidious profession, to believe all men damned but Papists, that I may enjoy the blessing of my mother ; I should be glad to know that she herself, as infallible as she is, could but probably assure me, where this word of her's may certainly be found.

The Representer indeed (in his confident way) hath told me, " that all the members of his religion (however spread through the world) agree like one man in every article of their faith." And if we would know for our learning, by what happy means this wonderful agreement is effected, he tells us, " it is by an equal submission to the determinations of their Church ;" that is, as I understand it, by taking her bare word for every thing. " No one of them," saith he, " though the most learned and wise, ever following any other rule in their faith besides this, of unanimously believing as the Church of God (or Roman Church) believes." And if this be so, I wonder to what purpose their learning and wisdom can serve them, any more than their judgment and wit, which they have renounced and deposed. However, if this be true representing, I shall not, I hope, find it difficult to find out the Church's word and authority, on which my faith must stand. Every member of it, though he hath no more than the old collier's faith, can help me to it in any part of the world, for all agree like one man, in every article, and therefore sure in this most fundamental one. But what now shall I think after this, if it should so fall out, that hardly one in a hundred of these members know either where this Church of theirs is to be found, or what those determinations of her's are, unto which

they so unanimously submit ? Nay, what if their Church itself cannot tell them this ? When she hath said all she can, to inform both them and us, suppose it be still two to one, that we shall be mistaken in it, whatever we take to be the Roman Church, or her infallible word ? This is it that I am now, for a close, to inquire into.

It must needs seem more than a little absurd, and exceeding hard to tie a man, under pain of damnation, to believe he knows not what, and what nobody can certainly shew him ; I mean a power in the Church of Rome, which all men deny, but they of her communion ; and about which, even they of her communion, are so divided among themselves, that I do not see how they can ever agree about it. Is there no dispute in that Church about this power ? Have they not been even at daggers drawing among themselves about it ? Is the controversy yet decided ? Or can any one promise me that it ever shall ? “ There is a great diversity among the schoolmen (saith our Representer) in their divinity-points, and opinions of such matters as are no articles of faith, and have no relation to it, but as some circumstance or manner, which being never defined by the Church, may be maintained severally, either this way or that way, without any breach of faith or injury to their religion.” I will not stay here to ask him, what greater diversity he can find amongst the members of our Church, than he here grants to be amongst Papists ; nor why our divisions, being no greater than theirs, nor more nearly related to any article of faith, should be less consistent with the unity of the Church (as is commonly objected against us) than theirs are : but I ask, whether the supreme authority of the Roman Church, be an article of the Roman faith, or no ? And again, whether all the members of that Church, be as one man, unanimously agreed about it, or no ? He will say, it may be about the article they are, as to the substance of it, though not as to all circumstances : but now if it appear, that these circumstances of the power about which they differ, are such as the thing itself will be as good as nothing without them ; or if they be not as certainly known and believed as the power itself, I think it will follow, that all their agreement about the thing, is as good as nothing too, till these circumstances be also agreed upon.

Thus it is then ; I must for my salvation believe, that there is such a thing as a supreme power over all Churches in the Church of Rome ; and in this all Papists, as one man, unani-

uously agree; but about the circumstances of this power, there is a great diversity of opinions among them; yet is this no injury to their religion. Though without a better agreement about these circumstances, no man, in my opinion, can be able to satisfy me what their religion is; for these circumstances about which they differ, are no more but such inconsiderable things as these, " whence this power is; whether it be of God, or of men; of Divine, or human right only; whether it extends over all the world, or over all Christians only; to spiritual concerns only, or to temporal also; where it resides and is lodged; in the Church diffusive, or all Christians, especially the pastors; or in the Church representative, or General Councils; or in the Church virtual, or the Pope of Rome." These petty circumstances they differ about, and the Church itself knows not how to agree them; but what is all this to the article itself, most firmly believed by all, that is, a supreme power in the Church? All their religion rests on the determinations of their Church; all the force of these determinations to oblige the faith of men, depends on this supreme power; may not a man, however, well enough be assured of his religion, though no man can tell him, " whence this power is, over what it is, or where it is?" Indeed, what other men can do, I know not; but for my own part, I must needs think it a very hard matter to believe this power, and to have any certainty of the religion founded on this power, without some better information about these circumstances of it, and therefore before I can yield to be of that religion, I must beseech that Church, which will not allow us to be saved, without an absolute submission and resignation of ourselves to her authority, to tell us, if not whence (which is yet the most material circumstance of all the rest), yet at least, what and where it is.

There is challenged by this Church, a power of over-ruling our faith by her infallible judgment, and a power of commanding our obedience by her sovereignty. It will therefore concern me to ask, how I may be rightly informed in both these great branches of her power, unto which my subjection is required upon pain of damnation.

1. She claims a power of interpreting, or giving the certain sense of Scripture, of judging and finally deciding all controversies of religion, of peremptorily defining and determining in all matters of faith and religious practice; so that all are bound, without any further dispute or search, to submit to all

her determinations and decrees, Infallible, then, we must believe this Church to be, and that she cannot err in her definitions of faith and manners: and yet where this infallibility is to be found, is a question she is not at this day able to resolve: in short, I find that this infallible Church, which tells us that she cannot err, when she is desired to make this apparent to the world, can tell us certainly, both how and in what she can err; and in this, I doubt not, but she is infallible enough; but who they are in all her communion, or in what things it is, that they cannot err, this she could never tell us certainly; and yet it is this alone that can make her infallibility (if she have it) to be of any use to us.

The Representer saith, "that the Papist believes that the pastors and prelates of his Church are fallible; that there is none of them (and yet the Pope is one of them, and Councils are made up of them) but may fall into errors, heresy, and schism, and consequently are subject to mistakes." And further he tells us, "that though some allow the Pope the assistance of a Divine infallibility, without being in a General Council; yet he is satisfied it is only their opinion, and not their faith, there being no obligation from the Church of assenting to any such doctrine." And though he maintain the necessity and right of General Councils lawfully assembled, yet is it not so plain, whether he count them infallible or no, by what he says in that chapter of Councils. This we are told, "that if anything contrary to what Christ taught, and his Apostles, should be defined and commanded to be believed, even by ten thousand Councils, he believes it damnable in any one to receive it." But in the following chapter he speaks out, and says, "that by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, they are specially protected from all error, in all definitions and declarations in matters of faith." And this is true, though he grants it possible, "that the pastors and prelates there assembled, may be proud, ignorant, covetous, enormous sinners, and infamous for other vices, and at other times may prevaricate, make innovations in faith, and teach erroneous doctrines." Now a man would think, that if all the guides and pastors of the flock (not one excepted) may err, then the sheep, which are bound to follow their shepherds, may err also; and if the fallible lead the fallible, it is not impossible for both to err; and who it is that is infallible, is hard to see. And again, seeing he tells us, "that Christ committed the care of his flock to St. Peter, and that the Pope or Bishop of

Rome is in this charge St. Peter's successor, and that God assists those who have this charge, with a particular helping grace, such as has a special respect to the office and function, and that such as was given to the prophets, and to Moses, when he was made a God to Pharaoh :" I cannot see, but it must be as consequent to all this, that the Pope should be infallible, as that a General Council is so, especially when it has approbation that gives force to its decrees. Moreover, it is not easy to believe, that God hath made a promise of infallible assistance to any number of pastors and prelates, who are no better qualified, than he supposes they may most of them be, with pride, ignorance, and vice, turbulence, and covetousness, and assembled, it may be, under an heretical Pope (for such, it is granted, he may be), and as vicious too, and ignorant as any of them. However, there are two things which make it very hard to find out this infallibility, where he sends us to seek it, in a General Council : for first, they must be lawfully assembled, and next, they must " determine nothing contrary to what Christ and his Apostles taught," otherwise it is " damnable to receive their determinations." Now it will be hard for me to find out how lawfully they were assembled, and therefore as hard to believe all their decrees as infallible ; and I fear, I must not be allowed to examine their definitions, whether they be according to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, or no, lest I thereby seem to follow my own private judgment or spirit, rather than the " infallible judgment of the Church representative." This is all then that I can learn from his discourse ; I must take it for a truth, that this infallibility is lodged in a General Council, and that it can determine nothing contrary to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles ; and then I need not inquire whether it have done so, or no ; though if it have done so, it is damnable for me to receive its determinations. But I will hear what others tell me.

Bellarmino saith, " that all Catholics are thus far agreed, that the Pope, as he is Pope, in the midst of his councillors, or together with a General Council, may err, or judge amiss in matters of faith." And if this be true, he may even so err in the whole faith, as far as I can yet see ; for he may thus err in determining that there were such men as Christ and his Apostles ; that any of them preached, planted Churches, writ books ; that these are their books, or that St. Peter was at Rome, and was bishop there ; left the bishops of that see his successors in all his power ; that there hath been an uninter-

rupted succession of bishops in that Church; that any unwritten traditions concerning faith and manners were left to the custody of the Church: and many more such things, which were matters of fact, and on which the faith of that Church depends. Again he saith, "that the Pope, as a private doctor, may err, even through ignorance, in matters both of faith and manners." And thus the Church, whether virtual or representative, may err. But I would fain hear, wherein she cannot err, and whether all Catholics are agreed as well in that.

The famous chancellor of Paris, Gerson, Almain, Alphonsus à Castro, the Parisian doctors, yea, and no less than Pope Adrian IV., saith the same author, have taught, "That the Pope, as he is Pope, may be a heretic, and teach heresy, when he defineth any thing without a General Council." And truly, if as a man he may be a heretic, I see no reason why he may not be so as a Pope; for I take the man and the Pope to be here both one. But further, these last named will have this infallibility or judgment to be in the Council, and not in the Pope. And Bellarmine tells us, "that this opinion is not properly heretical," and for this good reason (which if it should not hold, they would lose a great part of their Church), "because they that hold it are tolerated in the Church, yet it seems erroneous, and next akin to heresy." It should seem by this, that an error tolerated by the Church of Rome is no heresy; but if not tolerated it is. Indeed I know not well how ever she can err heretically at this rate, unless she will grow so unkind to herself as not to tolerate her own errors.

The same Jesuit tells us again, that it was the opinion of Albertus Pighius (and whether he was singular in it or no I shall not now ask), "that the Pope can by no means be a heretic, or teach heresy publicly, although himself alone define any thing without a Council." And this opinion he acknowledges to be probable, yet not certain. But I think it is very certain that Popes have been heretics, either as condemned by, or condemning one another for heresy.

Lastly, he saith, the most common opinion, and that for which he brings a multitude of authors, is this, "That whether the Pope can be a heretic or no, yet he cannot any way define any heretical thing to be believed by the whole Church." This he calls the most sure opinion, though they who are of it seem not very well agreed among themselves about it. For some of them say simply, "the Pope cannot err;" others speak it with

this limitation, “proceeding maturely with the advice of his Council.” But now, suppose he should be too hasty, and define something rashly of his own head: oh! that cannot be, saith Bellarmine, for God will not suffer it. And yet I wish he could tell us why God may not as well suffer an heretical Pope to define rashly, or indeed rather deliberately, according to his own heretical judgment, as suffer him, to whom he hath committed the charge of the whole flock, to fall into heresy.

However, considering this variety of opinions in the Church of Rome concerning this infallible judge, to which all must be subject in matters of religion, I begin to think with myself with what satisfaction of conscience I shall be able to live in that communion. I must obey the infallible judge, or else be damned: and who is this infallible judge whom I must obey? It is the Church of Rome; this all can tell me with one consent; but though this were true, yet am I no wiser for it; that whole Church never yet met to judge or determine of any thing. Who is it then in this Church to whose judgment I must submit? It is the Pope alone, say some; and yet these some are not agreed whether he may not define some things rashly, without due advice at least, when he is a heretic, as some Popes have been, if Popes themselves may be believed; and it seems not impossible that an heretic, obstinate in error, may define something rashly and unadvisedly. It is not the Pope, but a General Council, say others; and why these deserve not as much credit as the former, I know not; for they are tolerated by the Church, and surely the infallible Church will not for shame tolerate any dangerous error. It is neither the one nor the other, saith a third party, but a Pope in Council, or a Council confirmed by a Pope; and yet whether the determinations of such a Church-representative be of full virtue till they have been universally received, is made a question by a fourth party.

Where are we now, after all this, to seek our infallible judge? Suppose a Council should define it as a matter of faith, that the Pope himself is subject to a Council; and again, that a Pope, yea, a Pope in Council, define the contrary, that a Council is subject to the Pope. This is no idle supposition of an impossible or unlikely thing; for whosoever knows what was done in the Councils of Constance and Basil, consisting of as many patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops, as most of the Councils ever did; and again, what afterwards passed in the Councils of Florence, and the Lateran, under Pope Leo X. must

know that such a thing, at least, once came to pass. Suppose then this which once was, and if the Pope could endure to think of a free Council, might be again ; what should I have to ground any certain faith upon ? I must still, under pain of damnation, submit my faith to the judgment of the Church. It is not, neither I believe ever will or can be agreed upon, which is the judgment of the Church, that of the Council, or this of the Pope, or the other of Pope and Council. The contest is between those that will admit of no judge, and therefore of no decision. Their determinations already extant are directly contrary one to another, yet both pretended to be of faith. That both cannot be so is plain ; and it may be neither is so. And whether the one or neither be so, if I would determine for myself, I make myself the judge of the Church's definitions, even of those to which I must submit my judgment or be damned.

The other branch of power claimed by this Church is that of giving laws to all Christians, unto which all that will be saved must yield obedience. About this I find no better agreement among them than about the former. "There is so great a dispute among the doctors," saith one of them,* "about the fulness of ecclesiastical power, and unto what things it extends itself, that in this matter few things are secure." Yet that such a power there is, we must believe or perish, though none can certainly tell us what kind of power it is, whether purely spiritual or temporal also. And an universal power it must be, though we cannot learn how far it reacheth, whether to all or but some, either things or persons.

"It is held by many," saith Bellarmine, "that the Pope hath by Divine right a most full power over the whole world in matters both ecclesiastical and civil." And for this opinion he names Augustinus Triumphus, Alvarus, Pelagius, Panormitan, and others ; with whom their angelical doctor, Thomas of Aquine seems to consent. "In the Pope," saith he, "is the top-height of both powers."

Others say, that the Pope, as Pope, hath no temporal power at all, neither can any way command secular princes, or deprive them of their kingdoms and principalities, though otherwise they deserve to be deprived of them. For this opinion he names not so much as one of their own communion ; why, I know not, unless it were because he knew it to be an opinion

* Almain. de Auth. Eccles. c. 3.

very unwelcome at Rome, or because he thought there were but a few inconsiderable Papists that held it. And therefore he fathers it upon the heretics, whose loyalty to their princes will better bear it.

The Represente here tells us, “ He knows that the deposing and king-killing power has been maintained by some canonists and divines of his Church, and that it is in their opinion lawful, and annexed to the Papal chair ; and that some Popes have endeavoured to act according to this power.” Yet is he not willing that heretics of any sort should carry away the honour which Bellarmine bestowed upon them, of a loyal religion ; but saith, “ That there are of his communion three times the number that publicly disown all such authority ; that some universities and provincial Councils have condemned it ; and that Popish princes sit as safe on their thrones as others.” Yea, and he will engage, “ That all Catholic nations in the world shall subscribe to the condemnation of all such Popish principles and doctrines, and shall join with all good Protestants for the extinguishing them, with all that profess and practise them, and utterly rooting them out of his Majesty’s three kingdoms and the whole universe.” I must do him right, notwithstanding all this ; for he hath not said that the whole Church of Rome, or any General Council hath condemned this doctrine, or that it is by public authority, for the offence it gives, rased out of the canon law, nor the Lateran Council ; nor that Protestant princes can sit as safely in Popish countries as Popish princes may in Protestant countries. And when he tells us that the sentence of the supreme pastor is to be obeyed, whether he be infallible or no ; although I have a great opinion of the loyalty of many Papists, I durst hardly engage for his, if there should chance to be such a Pope again as himself confesseth some have been.

But what saith Bellarmine ? “ A third sort there is that takes a middle way ;” and he names not a few of them, himself being one of the number. These hold, that the Pope, as Pope, hath indeed no temporal power directly and immediately, but spiritually only. And such as he makes it, there needs no more ; for it will serve his Holiness as well, and the heretics, as ill, to all intents and purposes, yea, even to the deposing of princes, as the greatest temporal power in the world. “ For,” saith he, “ by reason of this spiritual, he hath also, at least indirectly, a temporal power, and that no less than the highest. And even as the spirit or soul hath power over the flesh to

chastise and even to deliver it up to death, in order to the spiritual ends of the soul: so also may the Pope, though not as an ordinary judge, yet as an extraordinary, in order to spiritual ends, change kingdoms, taking them from one and giving them to another, abrogate the civil laws of princes, and determine of their rights." This I am sure is more than ever St. Peter had by virtue either of the rock, or keys, or pastoral staff; and I am confident he never thought of half this, when he charged all men to "submit to the king as supreme," 1 Peter ii. 13. Nor when, ver. 17, bidding us "honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king," he omitted to mind us of the great duty of all, the subjection we must yield to his successors, the bishops of Rome; especially, when he might well suppose we should have been much apter to have learned it of himself than of any of his successors.

It is time for me now, I think, to consider into what a labyrinth I must run myself by going over to the Church of Rome; and how I can behave myself when I come there. I am going into a Church out of which, I am told, there is no salvation; yet I cannot foresee that this Church herself can tell me surely how I may be saved in it. Of this Church, I am told, I cannot be a member to any purpose, if I be not in all things subject and obedient to the supreme head of it, the Pope. And subject to him I cannot be, if I actively obey not his commands; for passive obedience is now become the despised badge of an heretic. But what the Pope's power to command is I can meet nobody that can certainly inform me. It is an "absolute power over all the world," say some: "no," say others, "but only over Christians, and in things spiritual." "Well," says the third party, "though it be directly and immediately only spiritual, yet it is no less for that; but in order to spirituals, it reacheth over all, both temporal persons, laws, and judgments." "All this power is in me only," saith the Pope. "You are too hasty, Sir," say some Councils and the doctors of France, "for the chief power is by Christ himself given to the Council, and even to put down and set up Popes, as they would deal with kings and emperors." Which of these now must I believe and obey?

The Prince, under whose government I live, may command me one thing, and the Pope, my spiritual father, may command the contrary. How must I now do to bear myself evenly betwixt two such masters? I consult my spiritual guides, and take the best advice I can get; some say one thing, and some

another ; and which to believe I stand in need of another guide to direct me ; nay, the Church itself, knew I where to find her (so visible is she), could not tell me which is in the right. If I believe those who tell me the Pope has no power in temporal matters, then is my Prince in all such matters to be obeyed, say the Pope what he will to the contrary. If I hearken to them that tell me "the Pope has a fulness of power in all, both temporal and spiritual matters ;" I must obey my Prince in nothing without the Pope's leave. If I listen to them who say the Pope's power in temporal matters is indeed the highest power ; yet indirectly only, and in order to spiritual ends, then am I so far to obey it, and no farther. And here I am at as great a loss as ever ; for who shall judge for me whether his commands be needful for spiritual ends, or no ? It is very unlikely that my Prince and the Pope should agree in the determination of this point ; and the difference being between them two and their commands, to whose award will they stand ? I must here necessarily be left to the direction of my own or some other private judgment, and which side soever I take it is an even wager whether I can be saved.

I have been considering all this while for myself alone, and the satisfaction of my own conscience. I presume not to judge for, nor of others. They who have more light, and better eyes, may go on more confidently ; it is all my care, to go safely for myself, and as inoffensively as I can to all others. I see many wise men among Roman Catholics, and I dare not say the contrary, but that they are of another religion than I, because they are wiser, and better able to choose than I. If I choose as wisely as I can for myself, I cannot do better for myself, and I doubt not of being saved whilst I do so well. And if it should prove so, that I choose the worse, he hath no reason to be angry with me, to whom I leave, and do not grudge the better.

I cannot yet think it necessary to salvation, to believe that Church infallible, which not only, in my opinion, but in the judgment of all other Christians (and they are two to one, and more), hath often erred, and doth very grossly err in many things ; and which, if we ask her, can herself only tell us, who they be in her communion that can err, but not who they be, that cannot. Nor can I think it safe to be of that Church, where I may not be allowed to judge or try, whether error be taught me or no. I cannot think I am bound to judge either myself or others in a state of damnation, for not denying our

senses, or captivating our judgments to the judgment of an infallible Church, which could never determine where her judgment or infallibility is certainly to be found : or for not obeying the head of that Church, which hath sometimes no head, sometimes many heads, and is always uncertain which is her head, or where it stands. If I must thus believe, and thus obey, nobody can tell me what, and declare I do all this, or in the judgment of that Church which must be believed infallible, be no better for turning Papist, then I verily think I am much safer as I am a poor Protestant. I am sure I may as safely, as I can freely, captivate my judgment both in faith and practice, to the doctrine and laws of the blessed Jesus, whom all Christians unanimously acknowledge both the supreme and infallible Head of the universal Church. I will no longer lose my labour in seeking an infallible guide, which almost every body can tell me of, but no man can certainly shew me. Instead of an ecclesiastical monarch on earth, I will content myself with that “ blessed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords,” whom his Father hath made sole Head of the Church, which is his body ; who long since told us that “ his kingdom is not of this world,” as, I fear, the Pope’s too much is.

A DISCOURSE

SHEWING

THAT PROTESTANTS ARE ON THE SAFER SIDE, NOTWITH-
STANDING THE UNCHARITABLE JUDGMENT OF THEIR AD-
VERSARIES: AND THAT THEIR RELIGION IS THE SUREST
WAY TO HEAVEN.

THE PREFACE.

COMING accidentally into a family, always frequented, and of late much disturbed by some Roman Catholics, who by fulminating damnation against all Protestants, had terrified some friends, I applied myself to clear their doubts, and to remove those fears wherewith the noise and threats of hell fire had affected their minds: this engaged me into a long debate with one of the parties, who was very positive and earnest in maintaining the utter impossibility of being saved out of the Church of Rome. And upon that it came to be inquired, whether it be their relation to Rome, or their relation to Christ, that men are to be saved by? Whether our state of eternity depends upon the talk, or confidence, or hard censures of men, or upon the truth of our religion, and our sincerity in professing of it? Whether it be the ever living God, or any mortal men, that make true religion? Whether that be not the best, which best agrees with the Divine Revelation? And, whether our Saviour had referred us to Rome, and the Papal authority, for the knowledge of saving truth; or plainly taught, by himself and by his Apostles, all that is requisite and sufficient to salvation?

About these we differed: but yet agreed upon the whole, that the great odds in point of safety, which they apprehended to be betwixt them and us, must be grounded upon the excellency of their religion above ours; and must therefore appear in their faith, worship, and morals, which are the essential parts of religion, and make it right or wrong, according as they are themselves.

The talk I had then about this subject, and the occasion of it, put me upon writing the ensuing Discourse. Wherein my chiefest aim hath been to fix my reader upon that which is positive with us, and is maintained on all sides, that being altogether requisite, and of itself sufficient to make a man a good Christian: and then to consider those points in belief and practice, about which we differ, and to shew on which side lies the advantage for means of grace, and certainty of salvation.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE Church of Rome would not only have all her dictates received as divine and true, but would likewise have nothing received as such, but what she delivers ; in so much that her writers would persuade us, that we can have no assurance of the truth of our common Christianity, because we receive it not from the infallible chair, and rely not on its authority for the proving of it. As if a man could not know, and firmly believe, that " Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," without so much as having heard any thing of a Roman Church and her infallibility. And as if those great truths which God had revealed, were not to be embraced and assented to, because they are his, but depended upon the good pleasure of a party of men, who can no more add greater authority to what God hath declared, than they can make their own sayings of an equal authority with God's.

We can admit that Church for a joint witness with other Christian Churches, that the Bible is the Word of God, and that the Christian creed is the Catholic faith : but there is no reason to think, that any thing is the more true, or the more necessary, merely because she saith it. That which is equally attested by all Christian Churches, who were all depositaries of the Divine oracles, and of the Christian religion, hath a cogent and clear evidence : but that wherein she stands divided from all the rest, and bears witness only to her own prerogatives, is either true, because she asserts it (which none will dare to say), or ought to be proved by the testimony of the whole Christian Church, and of Divine revelation, which she can never do.

So we have this great advantage in those things which we assert as points of saving faith, that we have the plain and express words of holy Scripture, and the concurrence of the whole Church : whereas those things which we reject, are made a creed only by one particular Church, not above one hundred years agone, and have no ground in holy writ.

Some may dispute with us about our rites or discipline, or some abstruse and disputable points : but for that faith whereon

we ground our hopes of salvation, nothing can be objected against it. It is the same wherein every Christian is baptized, the same which was before the Reformation, and before the want of it: in times of greatest purity the same faith was professed, and in the worst of times, under the greatest corruptions, it was still preserved: and that not in one kingdom, or only here in the West, but in all patriarchates, and in all Christian Churches in the world. We have neither added nor diminished, nor made any alteration in that rule of faith, which is the badge and the ground of Christianity. So that as to this point, our religion is now as it was long before Luther: we have no other Creed than that which was universally professed all along. Our dispute with the Church of Rome is about their new one, made since Luther, and professed nowhere else but in her communion, that we cannot embrace. It hath neither the same authority from God nor from man, as hath the catholic belief.

To make this plain here, I set the two Creeds at large, to be consulted as the reader finds occasion.

The Catholic and Apostolic Creed, explained by the Nicene and the Athanasian, in what concerns our Saviour's divinity, but never enlarged until the Council of Trent.

I BELIEVE IN GOD
THE FATHER AL-
MIGHTY, MAKER OF
HEAVEN AND EARTH.

AND IN JESUS
CHRIST HIS ONLY SON
OUR LORD.

WHO WAS CON-
CEIVED BY THE HOLY
GHOST, BORN OF THE
VIRGIN MARY.

THE ROMAN CREED.

I most steadfastly admit and embrace the Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions, with the rest of the constitutions and observations of the Roman Church.

I also receive the Holy Scripture according to that sense which the holy Mother Church (whose it is to interpret it) hath held and doth hold, nor will ever understand or interpret it otherwise, than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.

I profess also, that there are seven true and proper Sacraments of the new covenant, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, and necessary to the salvation of mankind (though not all

of them necessary to every man), viz. baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony, all which do confer grace; and whereof baptism, confirmation, and orders, cannot be repeated without sacrilege.

I likewise receive and admit all the received and approved rites of the catholic Church, in the solemn administration of all the aforesaid sacraments.

All and every thing which was defined and declared about original sin and justification by the most holy Council of Trent, I embrace and receive.

I profess likewise, that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there is really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: and that there is a conversion made of the whole substance of bread into his body, and of the whole substance of wine into his blood; which conversion the catholic Church calls Transubstantiation.

I also confess, that under either kind or species only, whole and entire Christ and the true sacrament is received.

I constantly hold that there is a purgatory; and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful.

As also, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, are to be worshipped and prayed to, and their reliques to be venerated.

SUFFERED UNDER
PONTIUS PILATE, WAS
CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND
BURIED.

HE DESCENDED INTO
HELL: THE THIRD
DAY HE AROSE AGAIN
FROM THE DEAD.

HE ASCENDED INTO
HEAVEN, AND SITTETH
ON THE RIGHT HAND
OF GOD THE FATHER
ALMIGHTY.

FROM THENCE HE
SHALL COME TO JUDGE
THE QUICK AND THE
DEAD.

I BELIEVE IN THE
HOLY GHOST,

THE HOLY CATHOLIC
CHURCH,

THE COMMUNION
OF SAINTS.THE FORGIVENESS
OF SINS,THE RESURRECTION
OF THE BODY,AND THE LIFE
EVERLASTING.

I most firmly assert, that the images of Christ, of the blessed Virgin, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained, and that due honour and worship is to be imparted to them.

I also affirm, that the power of indulgences was left by Christ to his Church, and that the use of them is most salutary to Christian people.

I acknowledge the holy catholic and apostolic Roman Church to be the mother and mistress of all Churches: and I promise and swear true obedience to the Pope of Rome, who is Christ's vicar, and successor to St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles.

I also without doubt receive and profess all other things delivered, defined and declared by the sacred canons and Ecumenical Councils, especially by the most holy Synod of Trent; and all things contrary to them, with all heresies whatsoever, condemned, rejected, and cursed by the Church, I likewise reject, and condemn, and curse.

This true catholic faith, without which no man can be saved, which at present I freely hold and profess, I will (by God's help) constantly retain and confess entire and inviolable to my last breath, and take care, to the utmost of my power, that the same shall be taught, held and professed by all under me, and whose care shall belong to me in my office. I the aforesaid N. promise, vow, and swear it: so help me God, and these holy Evangelists.

This Roman Creed it is about which we differ: for as to the Christian Creed, there is no dispute betwixt us; only that we account it sufficient, and will profess none else.

This is the state of the difference between the Church of Rome and ours. We stand for that faith which is confessed of all sides to be truly Catholic and Apostolic; and disown the Roman which they would impose upon us.

I know that they seek to retort this objection of making of new Creeds, and would make the distinct denial of the several

points of theirs to be in like manner so many articles of ours ; as if it were with us as fundamental a truth, that there is no Roman purgatory, as that the “ blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins.” Whereas it is most apparent, that the negative of false opinions doth in no wise become a part of the Christian doctrine, nor of the Christian creed.

True religion is not to swell in proportion to the increase of errors, for then every new addition to Christianity, would make a new necessary article for the rejecting of it, and it would be in the power of every heresiarch to enlarge the rule of faith against him. Whereas the Christian faith was once delivered to the saints, and must ever remain the same, whatever heresies some men are pleased to broach. That saints and images are to be worshipped, is a point of the Roman faith ; that they are not, is not a point of mine ; it is only a declaration of my disowning this Roman doctrine, as being neither in the Christian Creed, nor in the Word of God. The refusing of men’s errors, whether they be pagans or any heretics, is not a part of our belief, but rather of our disbelief. Our denying that Jupiter, or great Diana, or any creature, though never so solemnly canonized, are to receive religious honours, is only a renouncing of men’s devices, but doth not constitute so many new doctrines ; only what God hath commanded in this case, is part of our religion, “ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Our Creed and Religion therefore is still universal, and truly primitive, although our rejecting some points which they have made part of theirs in the Church of Rome, can neither be so primitive nor so universal. What our Church owns for her saving belief, is owned, and ever was, by all Christian Churches ; what she rejects from being such, is of a later date, and was never so general. So that instead of asking us, where was our religion before our forefathers were forced to leave the Roman Church ? It should rather be inquired, why they threw off those several tenets contained in the Roman Creed ? And the question would be plain and fairly stated, and might from every man that hath but read the Bible, receive a clear answer. But it is very unreasonable to demand such authorities for refusing of any new and absurd human inventions, as for the receiving those truths which God hath expressly revealed, and his Church received all along.

As for the vices or virtues of King Henry the Eighth, or any others, who were engaged to struggle with the Papal

power and usurpations, they signify nothing to us. The enormous faults of such as are reputed supreme and infallible guides of a party, may well reproach them: but our religion hath no dependence on historical passages of any men's doings. God's veracity and revelation is the ground we depend upon; Him we worship, and Him we believe, as is to be seen in our public liturgies; for that we claim the warrant of his Word, and the suffrage of all Christian Churches, than which no better ground, nor no higher authority is ever to be had. If the Roman Creed had the same, we would embrace it heartily, for the well-being of our souls; or if it were less repugnant to the Christian institution, we might be persuaded to comply, or be silent, for the peace and tranquillity of our present welfare.

But my design is only to settle and to pacify them that are staggered and disturbed with the ruder noise of damnation dashing against them; and therefore I will pursue things no farther than to shew, that neither the judgment of our adversaries, nor anything wherein both Churches disagree, any ways endangers our future happiness: but that as to the securing the eternal welfare of our immortal souls, ours is to be preferred before the Roman communion.

THE DISCOURSE.

THE concerns of eternity being so tremendous, and many not so well instructed as they should be, it is no wonder if some men are frightened with the fearful sentence pronounced against them by the zealots of the Roman party. To any man serious or timorous, threats of damnation are terrible, even in the mouth of a mortal creature: though it only betrays the presumption of any sinful man that dares sit on the tribunal of his Almighty Judge; yet because some are so tender and so weak in this point, as to be much disordered and dismayed to see themselves adjudged to hell, though it were but a dream or a melancholy fancy; therefore it may be worth the while, briefly to state the case, and consider on what grounds they proceed that so freely pronounce our doom. And I doubt not but to make it appear, that we want only their good word, or also their good will, when for safety and a sure foundation we are at least as well as they. It may surprise and startle to see one stare, and with great confidence denounce that you are a dead man, that cannot live an hour; but having recovered yourself, and reflected upon it, you pass it by without further

harm and smile at the humour. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?"

Our entire dependence is upon God, as well for the state of eternity as for the present. We do not fall, when we go hence, under a new or unknown power, neither are left to men's mercy: but the same God by whom we were taken out of our mother's womb, and to whom we were left, when we hanged yet upon her breasts; He that took care of us, and provided for us here upon earth, is still to dispose of us in our future state: and we shall be judged by Him, by whom we were made and redeemed.

This God whom we now serve, and under whose almighty dominion we must ever remain, is infinitely good. "He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Therefore he doth not seek advantages against them, nor lay snares in their way, nor wrap up his saving light in obscurity, but deals with them in much mercy, making that grace of his which bringeth salvation appear unto all men, that they may know the way to life, and clearly see what they must do to obtain eternal happiness. Thus, God shews men by that revelation he hath made of his blessed will, how they ought to walk and please him: therein all things necessary are very plainly expressed, that they may be understood of all. And for a further help and a greater security to men of all capacities, a summary of Divine truths, such as are fundamental and needful, was by times made and propagated, together with the Christian religion over all the world. So that we have the Word of God, and the Apostolical Creed, both of them always attested by the whole Christian Church, as two firm pillars, whereon to repose ourselves. That we might be strong and immovable in the faith, assured that we are not imposed upon by our guides, and that length of time hath made no alteration, but that we now hold the same things which were taught by Christ, and received of his Church; and that we make nothing necessary to salvation, which from the beginning was not so.

First then, The Word of God contained in the Holy Bible, is, by consent of all, that saving truth of God by which we must live, and by which we shall be judged; so that whatsoever is there written, is to be embraced as certain and as coming from God. Whether it relates to the creation and the government of the world, or to the many wonders which God

wrought in former ages, to deliver his people and to confirm and attest his revelation; or to the fall of man and the promise of a Saviour; or to his mission into the world, and his accomplishing the great work of our redemption; or to the Gospel-promises, and doctrines, and mysteries; or to laws and rules of righteousness, and institutions of Divine worship: whatsoever it relates to, it is to be embraced with a humble and obedient faith. Nothing is to be questioned that is contained in the Bible; all human authorities and human reasonings must submit to it; *for the Bible is the Word of God.*

Go into all the world, and you shall find all Churches every where assert the same as well as we. The Jews concur with us in the Divine authority of the ancient oracles, before our blessed Lord's coming: but all Christians in every part, and in every age of the Church, embrace and reverence both the Old and New Testament, as the Book of God, wherein are contained the declarations of his will, and the words of eternal life. If you inquire what they thought of it, in the first and second ages after our Saviour, or at any other time; or if you go to the Eastern or African Churches, or any the most remote place where Christianity is professed, you shall find all agreed in this, that the Bible contains the doctrine of eternal salvation, and is the Word of God. This is not a thing wherein the Greeks differ from the Latins, or Protestants from the Papists; but is the firm belief of all. This is a most constant and invariable tradition, which for extent of time and place is universal, and therefore of the greatest credit, altogether unquestionable.

So here is a very great number of divine and undoubted truths agreed upon by all the Christian world, even all the plain and clear propositions contained in holy Scripture. Although they be of things not seen, that are past or to come; yet being there revealed, they are assented to by all. And he that should deny any of them, would be condemned by Christians of all communions; his refusing to acknowledge the truth of any contents of the Bible, would be interpreted a denial of God's veracity, because they are all persuaded, that the Bible is the Word of God, written by the guidance and inspiration of his Holy Spirit.

He that rejects this foundation, on which all Christians are grounded, ought never to concern himself in the differences among them, nor pretend to be of any Church; for by his denying the truth of that revelation, which they all own to be

Divine, and whereon they rely, he makes himself an infidel and a party against them all. And yet if we could see to the bottom of things, I doubt not but it would appear, that the disputes and contentions which are among Christians, are most eagerly promoted by such as deride those great truths which they all own to be fundamental. They that jointly believe the truth and the Divine authority of the holy Scripture, are set to wrangling among themselves about some of its most obscure and unnecessary places, by them that believe none of it; and for not mutually embracing and practising those most important points whereon we are agreed, we expose those doctrines of our common salvation, which we all profess, to the contempt of the profane and incredulous world.

Secondly, The other pillar which, together with the holy Scripture, strongly supports our faith, is the Christian Creed. We find also for this the same consent of all Christian Churches, they are unanimous in the belief and profession of it, and hold all its Articles to be those great and necessary truths without which none can be saved. Whereas the several contents of the Bible, although equally true, yet are not of an equal concern, and are too numerous to be carried in mind: there was a collection of those principal points which are necessary to all, drawn and appointed from the beginning, as a form of sound words, or a summary of the Christian saving faith. This we call the Apostles' Creed; and this, I say, in all ages of the Church, and in the full extent of it, hath been received as a confession of that faith, without which none can be saved. Go to Rome, or to Geneva, or among the Lutherans, or the Muscovites, or the Greeks, or Ethiopians, as many as call on the saving name of Jesus, do thus make confession of their faith in him. Besides that each article is very expressly and in many places revealed in the holy Bible, here is the unanimous agreement of the whole Church from first to last, in every nation, and in every period of time from the days of Christ, that this is the badge and cognizance of a Christian believer, and that the profession of this belief is the faith once delivered to the saints, which shall endure to the end of the world. Into this faith, and none other, all Christians are baptized, in all communions, thereby to be made members of Christ's catholic Church, and heirs of everlasting life, if they keep it unto the end whole and undefiled.

Thus for the believing any of those points contained in the Apostles' Creed, or any of the histories, promises, or com-

mands delivered in holy Scripture, a Christian hath the best warrant he can have for the belief of any thing upon earth, even the joint attestation of the whole Church of every age, who testified publicly, and sometimes sealed their testimony with their blood, that the Bible is the Word of God, and the Creed is the faith of Christ. However Christians have fallen out about other things, as to these they are as one. The belief of this engageth you into no dispute with any. Here is a very great number of most marvellous transactions, and gracious promises, and righteous laws, and important predictions, which are owned by all to be Divine and infallibly true. Your belief and profession of these depend not upon your fancy, or the opinion of private guides, or the tradition of your country, or of your party, but upon the unanimous witness of millions of wise and good men, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and all those numerous Christian societies dispersed over the world, which make up the universal Church.

Here is enough owned on all sides to make up a happy agreement betwixt all Churches; the having the same Bible, and the same Creed, is a very firm, and large, and lasting foundation for peace. Here are all things that are of the greatest moment for faith and a good life, for the service of God, and the salvation of our souls, every where received and professed. He that would weigh the importance of each of those truths which are acknowledged by all, would wonder what it is that can divide Christians, and make them so fierce and uncharitable one against another. We see bigots of different communions damn and destroy one another, as if they were not partakers of the same nature, and joined together by owning the same God and the same Saviour, and all the chiefest articles of the same religion. Besides men's ignorance and malice, and intemperate zeal, no account can be given of the unbeseeming contentions of Christians among themselves; but that the things wherein they differ are of a present concernment, for wealth or dominion. Secular interest and human passions, no doubt, have made the breach, and they that secretly laugh at all religion, and neither regard the Creed, nor the Word of God, set on the zealots to dispute, and for their own ends make use of the contention; when all this while there is a vast collection of truths for comfort and contempt of the world, for meekness and mutual love, professed to be firmly believed by all parties engaged.

But as men are always craving and pursuing new things,

rather than they will make an estimate of what they have received, because they love to extend their desires, rather than to be satisfied, and to be thankful ; so they rather choose to wrangle and dispute about the meanest punctilios wherein they are at odds, than to rest in the greater things wherein they are agreed, because they love to talk and to contend, better than to practise, and embrace each other.

This unsettles some men that they know not what to believe, and gives great occasion to the profane to despise religion, as if all the talk about it were arbitrary and uncertain ; they magnify the variety of opinions, and make as if the whole were matter of contest, when they see the contenders act as if they were agreed about nothing. Whereas I say, all the great articles have always been unquestioned, notwithstanding the peevishness of some, and the ill designs of others, still the same rules of holiness, and the same points of belief, have remained constant and embraced by all : the same Divine revelation, and the same Christian faith, have everywhere prevailed, and in the midst of all disputes been preserved and acknowledged. So that the whole substance, and all the necessary parts of religion, have always been sacred, confessed and reverenced by all Christian Churches.

The twelve articles of our Creed, and all the uncontroverted truths revealed in holy Scripture, make up a body of divinity, so full, so excellent, and so comprehensive, that if we compare it with the uncertainties and dissensions that were every where in the heathen world, at the first preaching of Christianity, we shall look on its professors as very harmonious and very well agreed. There were never so many things, so great, so wonderful, of so infinite a concern to mankind, so strongly attested, or so firmly believed by such infinite multitudes of civilized and knowing men in all parts of the world, for so many ages together.

Here is a foundation whereon every good Christian may build peace and charity towards all his brethren, of whatever countries or communions they be, and may establish a sure hope of eternal happiness to his own soul ; if he doth heartily profess and obey those undoubted truths which are embraced and acknowledged by all Christian Churches. He that is fully persuaded of the truth of Christianity, and willing to depend for his salvation upon that plain and essential part of it, which is confessed by all, and to lay the great stress of his hopes and of his obedience upon his Creed, rather than upon

controverted points ; he hath what will comfort his soul, and encourage him to live well ; and he is safe, peaceable and unmovable in the midst of all divisions : he may be doomed, and called names by them that would impose their opinions as articles of faith ; but it doth him no harm, whilst he stands firm upon the rock of the Christian Creed, and the Christian life together.

These two are acknowledged of all sides, to be both requisite and sufficient to salvation : faith and works together making up the whole condition of that Gospel Covenant, to which is annexed the promise of eternal life. Therefore in inquiring why they are all condemned as reprobates, that are not of the Roman communion, we must consider what are the advantages peculiar to that party.

- I. *Whether their faith be more ancient and catholic.*
- II. *Whether their worship be purer, more conformable to God's Word.*
- III. *And whether their righteousness exceeds that of all others.*

I begin with that faith which is peculiar to Rome, and is at large set down in the introduction. It indeed contains more articles than that of any other Church, and it may still receive further increase, whilst their Popes and Councils can make and impose new definitions as necessary ; but we believe that saving truths are neither made by men's authority, nor evidenced by number. We are contented with that faith once delivered by Christ and his Apostles, and from the beginning received by the whole Church, and for this are declared heretics, and adjudged to perdition.

That Roman faith about which we differ, is made so essential and so necessary, that their converts are appointed by the Roman Pontifical, in answer to the Bishop's Questions, that reconciles them, to make an express profession of it ; and if he were a noted heretic, even to swear to it, condemning all to damnation that embrace not the same ; and promising, "that if ever he acts or believes any thing contrary to that oath he takes with both his hands on the holy Evangel, he will submit himself to the severity of the canons."

Although we be so far agreed with the Church of Rome (as hath been said before) yet they lay so great a stress upon their new creed, and derive so much of their devotions from it, that

it is an astonishing and formidable change to pass from our Church into theirs. Besides the surprise of their public worship, which by a great variety of ceremonies, images, and the Latin tongue, appears very strange ; they have a prescribed form of reconciling heretics, to which none can submit, but they that are fully persuaded that "those opinions which became a Creed since the Council of Trent, are part of that saving truth of God, which must be believed and professed by all, under pain of eternal damnation."

It is not, as some may fancy, or perhaps are told, when solicited to change, that they shall find it very easy, and be received upon what terms they please : but the Church of Rome, as all other wise societies, hath its fixed rules and forms, and follows them without taking notice of the talk or thoughts of private persons. There is nothing can justify the change, or make it tolerable to a man of conscience, but the being convinced of the truth and necessity of these Roman doctrines, which thitherto were no part of his creed. When he hath searched and used all proper means to understand the points in dispute, and to satisfy himself, and finds himself thoroughly persuaded "that there is no salvation in our Church, and that the belief and worship peculiar to the Church of Rome are truly Christian, and the necessary terms of our acceptance with God," then is he obliged to follow his light, and to make profession of what he believes to be truth. But till a man be thus convinced, his forsaking ours to join with the Church of Rome, is a great prevarication against God and men, that will make him odious to both, and be inexcusable here and hereafter. The formal abjuration of all that the Roman Church doth condemn, and the solemn profession with a sacred oath of all her religious doctrines and practices in their full latitude (as is pretended in the Roman Pontifical), should make every doubting person amongst us very serious and very inquisitive, clearly to know what he doth leave, and what he must embrace, if he resolves to forsake ours and embrace the Roman communion.

The case will be much more tolerable with them that were born and educated in that persuasion, if they are in a mistake ; they having never professed, nor perhaps had means to know any thing else, is a plea of which they are not capable, who, grown to years of discretion, turn from one Church to another. These had need take great care that they deal uprightly, and examine to the bottom of things, otherwise they mock God and men, and must expect to fare accordingly.

I do not deny, but that persons of understanding and sincerity may be prevailed upon to pass from ours into the Roman Church ; for whilst men are mortal, they may err and be imposed upon : and may they all obtain mercy that truly fear God, and embrace what they judge to be his truth (though they be mistaken). I only say, that no man educated among us, that really believes his Christian Creed, and would not throw his soul away, can make profession of the Roman faith, till he becomes fully convinced of its truth and necessity. For now it is not as it was before the Council of Trent, when the Church of Rome itself had no other confession of faith but only the Christian, which is common to all Churches, and those opinions which have since become articles of the Roman faith, needed not be explicitly professed, if they were but let alone, and not disputed against : whereas now since Pope Pius IV., heretics, so called, that become proselytes, must make a solemn and express declaration, "that they believe every thing that the Church of Rome doth either teach or practise, and that they will submit and conform entirely to all that she prescribes either for faith or for divine worship." This, I say, no man of conscience or honour can do, till he becomes equally persuaded of the truth and necessity of the Roman, as of the Christian Creed.

Confidence proves nothing, and makes nothing to be really divine ; and we all know, that religion is not what some men will call so : neither can we believe as we would, or as we are bid ; we must have sufficient reasons that those things are from God, which are proposed to our faith ; so that persuaded, as we are, we might for temporal designs, play the hypocrites and dissemble, but we can never become proselytes to the Church of Rome. And whilst we have reason to believe that those articles of faith, which are peculiar to that Church, are rather contrary to God's revelation than contained in it, and so think it our duty to disown their Roman Creed ; we are so far from apprehending ourselves to be in danger of damnation for so doing, that we rather believe we should incur that danger, if against our persuasion and conscience we should solemnly protest and declare those things to be our belief and our faith, which indeed are not so.

How just and material are our objections against each particular doctrine which Rome would impose upon us, is to be seen in many of the late treatises upon those subjects ; so here I shall give no further account why we reject the Roman

Creed, than by making upon it these three general reflections, which alone might be sufficient to prove, that it can in no wise be necessary to salvation.

1. That the Roman Creed seems to be calculated for the meridian of this world, rather than for the obtaining the happiness of that which is to come. The Christian Creed doth make no man greater or richer here on earth, it is a profession of our faith in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which unites us to him, engageth us to love and to serve him, and to confess Christ before men, and obey his Gospel; the end of it is to make us hope well and live well, to give us comfort against all sorrows, and strength against all temptations. But the Roman Creed makes the Roman Court very great and very rich, and makes men have a great dependence upon it. It establisheth those opinions which much advance the Roman dominion, making Rome to be the mother and mistress of all Churches; engaging men to submit entirely to her, in embracing all her traditions and constitutions; and obliging all hers that have any power, to use it to the utmost, to bring all men, as they are able, under her obedience.

Then for gain you have several articles, the doctrine of purgatory, and of indulgences, the worship of saints and images, which doth not exclude gifts and oblations to them; and the sacrifice of the mass offered, as they are paid for it, for the living or for the dead; besides all the appeals to Rome, and the bulls and expeditions from it: read their whole Creed over again, and you will clearly see that it all makes for the empire, or the profit of Rome. It is a shrewd suspicion that they that have made it, and imposed it upon the world, did therein regard their own advantage more than the truth of Christian religion. When the old universal Christian Creed makes all for the honour of God, and for the sanctification and salvation of human souls, and this new particular Creed is all for the glory and the power of Rome; who that hath not resigned up his reason, but will be forced to think, that the one is to bring men to heaven, and the other to bring profit to Rome.

2. A man will be so much the more confirmed in this opinion, when he shall observe that the Roman zeal is all turned this way. The endeavours of their zealots are much greater to make men of the Roman persuasion, as to the controverted points, than to make Christians in what we are all agreed: and amongst them, a man that believes the Bible and the ancient Creeds, is as much damned and hated as if he

were a mere Turk or heathen. Their proceedings against them whom they call heretics, have been much more bloody and violent than against mere unbelievers; as if owning the same God and Saviour, and the same articles of hope and redemption, were nothing, except we also own the same submission to Rome.

It may be reckoned as an instance of their great earnestness to propagate their Creed, that their later miracles, for more than these five hundred years, are all in the behalf of it. The “faith once delivered to the saints,” was evidenced by those ancient miracles recorded in the Bible: but this growing faith of Rome is recommended to people’s belief by later wonders, such as their Legends and Breviaries, and many books of devotion contain. I need not say that many of those miracles here in the Western Church are so dubious and ill-contrived, that they make little for the credit of those doctrines which they are designed to vouch: I only note that they are all intended for to make credible those points of the Roman faith, which are destitute of the testimony of God’s word, and of the universal Church: and that if we had not better miracles, and much better attested, for the proof of that religion that came from Jerusalem, than they have for that which came from Rome, libertines would not want an advantageous plea to justify their infidelity.

And, 3. We may add, that this Roman Creed is both new and confined, whereas the Christian is as catholic as the Church itself; that is, is equally extended to all times and places, was ever every where received, and is now professed in all Churches, and in all parts of the world. Instead of this universality for age and extension, the Roman Creed bears date 1564, and being dated from Rome, is professed by none but those of that communion, which are but few in comparison with the rest of the Christian world. So that if you pass into the African, or Greek, or Eastern Churches, which are vast and numerous, you shall find no other Creed but that of the Apostles, explained by the Nicene and the Athanasian; if in some of these places they have some of the Roman opinions, or some of their own as doubtful and new, yet they have no other confession of faith, than as we have in our Reformed Churches in the west.

Nay, even in the Church of Rome, in the third session of the Tridentine Council, 1546, they made a decree, that according to the example of the Fathers, “they would make a

confession of that faith, which in ancient times had been an impenetrable shield against all heresies, which alone had been used for the conversion of unbelievers, for the confusion of heretics, and for the confirmation of the faithful ;" and then repeated the Nicene Creed and no more ; declaring, "that that was the express and formal faith of the Church of Rome, that faith which is the principle of Christian unity, and the sure and only foundation against which the gates of hell shall never prevail."

Happy had it been for the Christian world, if this matter had so remained ; and the Roman articles under Pius IV. eighteen years after, had not been made a necessary and essential part of the catholic faith. However, it is to be observed further, that even now in the Roman Church, when they baptize children or grown persons, they use none but the Apostles' Creed ; and to make them members of Christ and his Church, and heirs of his kingdom, oblige them to the profession of no other articles, but those that are the ancient confession of faith common to all Christian Churches. Nay, more, whilst they live in that communion in all acts of worship, and when they die in it, and are to make the last confession of that saving faith, of which they soon expect the end and consummation, they use none but the three catholic Creeds ; the Roman serves only to tie all power and government to St. Peter's chair, and to persecute heretics withal. So that this Roman Creed being for temporal advantages, being not contained in the Word of God, nor proved by the testimony nor by the miracles of the primitive Church, nor received by former ages, nor by any Church but the Roman, nor by that but very lately, and only in some cases professed : we have great reason to believe, *that it is in no wise necessary to salvation.* The Christian and universal Creed having been esteemed sufficient, without any other, for more than fifteen hundred years, ought to be so esteemed still, without this addition, which is proved but by very unlikely and uncertain miracles, and by the attestation of but that one particular Church, for whose wealth and grandeur it so entirely makes.

These things considered, we ought no ways to be dismayed, with the frightful words or countenances of any that pronounce us accursed and damned, because we hold not, nor can believe what Pius IV. did lately declare to be *de fide* requisite to salvation. We shall find saving instructions and comfort enough in the Christian Creed, which God's Word expressly

confirms, and the whole Church hath ever owned, if we embrace and study more and more the Divine and invariable truths it contains, and sincerely endeavour to lead our lives accordingly.

II. What I have affirmed of the Roman faith, is to be understood also of the Roman worship: that part of it which is not approved by us, is very bad; palliated or improved by the cunningest or wisest of their Church; or however no ways necessary, which is all I am at present concerned in.

Indeed, as to the essentials of Divine worship, all Christians are agreed, that God should have our prayers and praises, in the name of Jesus Christ our Mediator; even the matter of our requests is fixed and uniform amongst all that own the Lord's Prayer; so far the Church of Rome hath many excellent and ancient compositions, very unlike those new ones we reject. That part of their public or private worship, which is grounded upon the Christian Creed, is very good; and if they went no farther, we might as lawfully join with them, as they might with us. We have inserted nothing doubtful or controverted in our offices of religion, nothing but what as to the sense is used and approved by all Churches. Had they done so, and extended their worship no farther than could be justified by that Christian belief which is common to all, the differences between them and other Christians had been much less, and more reconcileable. But they have turned all the points of their new Creed into exercises of public religion: and these we do not think to be acceptable to God, nor requisite to acquit us of that adoration and service which we owe to his Divine Majesty.

We are persuaded, that without making or worshipping images of God, we may pay him that homage which he requires of us; that if we devoutly commemorate our Saviour's passion, and with thankful hearts put our trust in the merits of it, we shall not need to worship the figure of his cross; and that if we lift up our hearts to heaven, to adore him on the right hand of God, we need not worship the host here on earth, which many Christians believe to be only the sacrament of his death, and none can be sure to be the substance of his natural body; no not according to the tenets of the Church of Rome.

Likewise that part of their worship which relates to creatures; the solemn blessing or consecrating images, that, being hallowed, they may be fit to be set up to receive incense and

oblations, and many honours, and to excite their devotions to saints and angels : their manifold pilgrimages and prayers to those beatified creatures ; the great dependence they express to have upon their intercession, their merit, and their power ; the many miracles and mercies they are said to receive from them ; and the high celebrations and returns of religious gratitude which they render to them : all these, which make too great a part of their public and private devotions, we have great reason to believe to be inconsistent with God's revealed will, and with our duty and obligations to him ; or however, no ways necessary.

I appeal to them that have either read the New Testament, or learned the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, which all Churches teach to be the principles of the Christian religion, whether our calling upon him in whom we believe, and serving him alone that hath declared himself jealous of his honour, and using no images in our addresses to him that hath forbid them, and approaching to God by that one Mediator whom he hath appointed, and who died and merited all for us, and bade us come to him, and use his name alone in all our requests ; whether this worship which is paid to God amongst us, be not more conformable to his holy Word, and to the grounds of our common Christianity, than that which is established in the Church of Rome ? Whatever they may think of us where the inquisition reigns, and under it blind ignorance, and a terrible aversion against them that are called heretics ; yet elsewhere men of better sense and greater instruction, though of the same Church, can hardly pronounce us to be God's enemies, and the objects of his wrath, because we are afraid to give his glory to others, and to transgress his laws ; or however, their thoughts will not alter the case, and can do us no harm, we having a rule of God's own prescribing to believe and to worship by, and whilst we "render to God the things that are God's," we need not fear the rash censures of uncharitable men.

We have the warrant of holy Scripture, and the concurrence and approbation of all Christian Churches for the worship established in our Church : if accordingly we serve God with sincerity and devotion, we shall have the reward of them that diligently seek him ; however we transgress no law of his, and we run no risk : but if the worshipping of saints and images should prove unacceptable, the Papists run a great danger, they having neither antiquity nor Scripture for the same, whilst

the admonitions of their fellow-Christians, and some Divine prohibitions are point-blank against it.

III. As for *the necessity of a good life*, our Church recommends it at least as much as the Roman. All Christians believe a judgment to come, and a retribution to men according to their works ; so we have all the same promises of God, and the same rewards propounded to encourage us to do good ; we believe the same threats and the same punishments to deter us from evil ; we all think ourselves obliged to morality, and to be truly virtuous, knowing that “without holiness no man shall see God :” and I make no doubt but that in other Christian communions, as well as in ours, there are many “who truly fear God and work righteousness.” The difference betwixt us and the Roman Church is not, “whether or no we ought to be good ;” but every one in either Church, according to his sincerity, and his firm persuasion of the truth of Christianity, endeavours to approve himself to the Searcher of hearts ; so far we are agreed. They have many things in their Roman Creed, and in their worship, which we cannot approve ; but we have the same rules of life, the same Divine laws to direct our obedience.

And I would to God we did all join in those things which admit of no dispute, and wherein we are all agreed, and did lay the great stress of our hopes and of our endeavours on them, *viz.* the hearty profession of the same Christian Creed, the sincere worship of the same God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a serious earnestness to follow the example and the precepts of our common Saviour, and to live in this present world soberly, righteously, and godly : these that are the great things of God, and the foundation of Christian religion, and of true goodness, being owned on both sides, if they were minded as our interest in them, and their certainty do require, would go near to compose our differences in other things, and to restrain that uncharitable zeal which hath doomed to damnation millions of good Christians.

However, they that truly believe all the articles of the Christian faith, and worship God according to his will, and our Saviour’s institutions, and are careful to live like Christians worthy of the Gospel, need not regard those devices, nor fear those judgments which proceed only from men ; they may be true and happy saints both here and hereafter that have for faith and the service of God, and for a holy life, all that is of Divine appointment, without the Roman additions. Our rejecting what the Church of Rome hath for her interest im-

posed where her power doth reach, will in nowise exclude us from heaven, if we be true to what we own. If by our life and profession we confess Christ here before men, and are not ashamed of him nor of his words, we need not fear he should hereafter disown us, because of their anger that would have us take for Gospel whatever they dictate. Damnation shall not be inflicted according to men's passions and uncharitableness ; we ought to run from the danger of it, as far as is possible, by preserving that faith we were baptized into, pure and undefiled, and by living according to it : but had the promises of mercy and salvation been annexed to our submission to Rome, either the universal Church would have clearly expressed it in making men members of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom, or to be sure God would have revealed it. And seeing none of these is done, it doth plainly demonstrate that such a submission is designed for temporal power, but no ways requisite to bring men to heaven, and that consequently the hard sentence of Roman bigots against us, may be prejudicial to them, but can do us no harm.

This might suffice to shew that we are safe, notwithstanding their outcries of damnation against us, that part of their religion which is called Popery being no part of God's revealed will and saving truth, nor of the primitive and catholic Christianity embraced by the whole Christian Church.

In point of faith, or of divine worship, what is peculiar to them, is far enough from being necessary : and for rules of conversation we have the same precepts, and believe the same promises and the same punishments. So that though we reject many of their own inventions, yet still we want nothing necessary to salvation, and in order to it they have no advantage over us.

But I may not stay here. The interest of truth and human souls obligeth me to say farther, that we are safer in our Church, and have several advantages for the obtaining comfort and eternal happiness, of which they are destitute in the Church of Rome.

First, I say, *That we are safer*. What we believe as an article of faith, is undoubtedly true, owned by all Christians in all ages of the world, and plainly revealed in God's Word ; whereas those traditions which the Church of Rome hath tacked to the ancient faith, are newly coined, and yet more newly made a Creed, are not warranted by Divine revelation, nor embraced by Christians of other communions. And what

a presumption is it to change the terms of salvation, and make those things necessary which God hath not prescribed, and the Christian Church for many hundred years hath not owned as a part of her saving faith ?

This is so like adding to the Book of God, preaching another Gospel, and "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" that we think ourselves much safer within the ancient boundaries, and look upon it as a very dangerous attempt to make new creeds, and impose them upon men's consciences, especially when those additions are not only beyond what is written, but also of another nature, and even contrary. The Christian Creed is for life everlasting, the Roman, for the Roman greatness : the Christian expresseth our obligations to God, and our dependence upon him ; the Roman is a profession of subjection to Rome : the Christian engageth men to serve God only ; the Roman to worship creatures also : the Christian makes our blessed Redeemer to be our only Mediator ; the Roman joins to him the blessed saints and the blessed Virgin. There are so many things in all appearance very irreconcileable betwixt those two confessions of faith, that the Roman cannot be safe ; and that we may conclude without uncharitableness, that they of that persuasion that shall attain to heaven, shall not come thither by the help of the Roman doctrines, but by discharging their baptismal engagements which are the same with ours, and by professing the ancient common Creed of all Christians.

The points of their own Creed are so far from conducing to men's salvation, that they rather will prove great hindrances to it. They engage men in a worship very unlike to what we read in the Apostolical writings, or the ancient Fathers. Besides the unknown tongue, and the maimed communion, there is so much of it that is merely human and ceremonious, so much of it that relates to the souls in purgatory, or the saints in heaven, that we wish it may meet with pardon, but cannot think it should find acceptance. There are so many strange exorcisms and consecrations in their Rituals and Pontifical, that after having read the Bible, a man can never think theirs to be that worship in spirit and in truth, which the Gospel appoints. We dare not offer to Almighty God what is so like to be injurious to him, and so unlike his own institutions ; and have much greater assurance to have our sacrifice of prayers and praises accepted, when according to divine appointment we offer it to God, in the name of his blessed Son.

The same holds also for virtuous living and improvement in goodness, that their new doctrines are rather obstacles to, than helps towards it. The great dependence upon Rome and the Papal power, hath made many of that communion very ill subjects, and many more very cruel and uncharitable to all other Christians. The making a whole state of sin, although known and persisted in, yet to be a state of pardon and safety, consistent with the love of God; the buying and imputation of other men's merits and good works; the easy purchase of many indulgences, the customary and frequent absolutions for mortal sins; the patronage of the greatest saints to the greatest sinners, when they are their particular votaries: such prevailing opinions as these abate much of the necessity of a serious and speedy repentance, and earnest pursuits after sanctification, and too much gratify the corruptions of men that are desirous to enjoy their lusts, and not lose the hopes of heaven. So if a mixture of false and uncertain propositions with their faith; if a worship very corrupt and very superstitious; and if doctrines apt to betray men to a careless and vicious life: if these can endanger human souls, we cannot think them safe in the church of Rome. So far as they differ from us in their additions to the primitive faith, so far they are in danger. We pronounce no sentence, and we pray Divine mercy to pardon them that err in the simplicity of their heart: but their errors and suitable practices may be the ruin of many, and our charity can save none. Blessed be God, we are safer, and have many advantages for comfort and for holiness, of which they are destitute.

Men of a timorous and tender conscience amongst them, can never have a comfortable knowledge and assurance of their having confessed all their mortal sins, or all those circumstances that alter the kind; nor of the intention of the priest, which is necessary to make effectual his absolutions; nor of the validity of any sacerdotal ministrations and consecrations, all which depend upon secret intentions or irregularities, which may be incurred many ways, and may proceed so far as to be irremediable; of these which, according to their principles, so much concern their happiness, a thoughtful man, I say, can never be so sure as to make him rejoice in hope, and have a solid peace. And what a sad prospect is it to them that think the sufferings of this present life so very grievous, that after all their pains and charges to gain pardons and indulgences, and prayers for their souls, they can have no assurance

without a miracle, but that they shall lie hundreds of years in scorching flames, paying the score of those temporal punishments which were due to their sins. Besides the uncomfor-tableness of these Roman tenets, they want in that communion the benefit of those divine instructions which were written for our learning; "that we through comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." That holy Word of God which giveth light and understanding to the simple, and is able to make us wise unto salvation, and to save our souls, if we believe the blessed Author of it: that Word in the Church of Rome is kept from the people, lest it should make the ways of God plain before their faces, and shew them what a mighty change in the Christian religion hath been made amongst them. And that keeps the vulgar in a state of darkness and timorous superstition, and deprives them of those spiritual joys and improvements, which Divine revelation would afford. If any book in the world can be truly pleasant and comfortable, it is the holy Bible, wherein we see the infinite wisdom and power and providence of God in the creation and government of the world, and particularly in his care for them that love and serve him; the sacred history is so full of comfort in all changes of human life; the infinite goodness and other perfections of God are so clearly revealed in it, that by reading thereof, an attentive Christian in all his afflictions is inspired with wise and good thoughts, and courage, and firmness of mind, and a joyful dependence upon God. Then the mercies and mysteries of our redemption, the life and death of our blessed Saviour, the excellency of his precepts, and of the sermons and writings of his Apostles, and the infinite graciousness of his promises: these are so ravishing and so wonderful, so apt to support our spirits, and to nourish our hopes, to give a good man a fore-taste of the joys of heaven, and to bring us to the likeness and the sense of God's love, that nothing can give equal comforts to Christians, or any ways supply the want of these. It would be the greatest wonder why any Church that believes the Old and New Testament to be the book of God, should forbid the reading of it: but that the contrariety betwixt their traditions and those Divine writings, is very apparent to them that can consult and compare both. That, or nothing, must excuse their uncharitableness in taking the Divine oracles from them, for whose consolation and guidance they were appointed.

Again, they want the comfort and instruction of God's public worship. What Scriptures are read in the public assemblies

of the Roman communion, are in the Latin tongue, by which the understanding of the people is rendered unfruitful. What prayers and supplications are put up to God, are in the same language; they know not what is said, and therefore cannot assent with their hearts, nor excite such devout affections in their souls as would recommend their common requests to the throne of grace. Neither are the celebrations of the Divine goodness understood, they praise not God with joyful lips: and that pious intercourse they should have with him, in paying their homage, and presenting their thanks and petitions to his Divine Majesty, being thus interrupted by their not understanding what is said, they are deprived of one of the principal means of edification. It is strange it should ever enter into the hearts of men, to offer to God for a reasonable service, words of which they know not the signification. And it renders ineffectual those acts of religion which should most affect and better the hearts of Christian worshippers, and raise up their thoughts and their affections to heaven.

From hence it is, that we have more knowledge of God, and more understanding of the Christian religion. They amongst us that really believe Christianity, and would make sure of the happiness it offers, by searching and meditating of the holy Scriptures, and by joining with the public worship; whilst they attend and understand what the Church saith to God, and what he saith to us, are much improved in those great principles of religion which they learned in their Catechism, and are made to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord." They have in these two, what perpetually informs their judgment, and excites their will to cleave to God and goodness; and after their best endeavours, to rely upon those infinite mercies of God in Christ our Redeemer, on which the greatest of Roman champions confessed that it was most safe to repose our whole trust and confidence.

Answerable to those, are the public exhortations of our Church, by the mouth of her ministers, and the books of religious instruction wherewith she entertains her children. Their time, and zeal, and attention, are not taken up in sprinklings, kissings of reliques, going in pilgrimage, visiting of shrines, paying devout veneration to saints and images, and reciting beads and rosaries, and the offices of St. Bridget, or the like. Neither these things, nor any of this nature, which can neither instruct nor reform the world, nor give comfort to Christian souls, are recommended to our people: they are clearly taught

wherein true religion and substantial goodness consist, and exhorted to lay on them the great stress of their hopes and of their endeavours, and devoutly to make use of those means of grace which are of Divine appointment, and thereby to establish their hearts in the love of God, and a cheerful dependence upon the infinite merits and mercies of our dear Saviour.

Nothing of the whole counsel of God is by our Church kept back from us, our belief is unquestionable, being truly primitive and universal; our worship of God is according to his will, and his most blessed nature; and our rule of life and conversation comprehends all duties: to "fear God, and honour the king, and love one another, and continue patient in well doing." Ours is indeed a doctrine according to godliness, and of it, it may be testified in the words of St. Peter, that it "is the true grace of God wherein we stand."

If we are not wanting to ourselves, we want nothing that can either shew us the way to happiness, or help and forward us in it; we ought to express our charity to them that err, and want many of those blessings and advantages which we have for the obtaining eternal salvation; we should earnestly pray for them, and, what we can, promote their instruction, but by no means fear their threatenings and sentences of damnation.

He that in earnest would go to heaven, and professeth Christianity, not to obtain favour with men, but to please God, and to save his immortal soul, can be nowhere safer than in our Church. Therein he professeth that faith which all Christian communions hold to be truly Divine, and therein he may make his calling and election sure, if he will but practise answerably to his belief, add to his faith virtue, and not be unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The more he understands his religion, the more he will love it, and be convinced that he is in the right: and the more carefully he lives according to his profession, with a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, the more assurance will he have that he shall be happy.

All other grounds of hope, besides truth and righteousness, will prove vain. But he that stands upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone; he that studies and minds his duty, and earnestly begs for the Divine assistance that he may live to God, and remain faithful unto death; he shall receive the

crown of life, though some presumptuous men dare condemn him to death.

Whatever confidence or high pretences some may have, whatever ways and devices they invent for to gain heaven, "Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by him; there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they can be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; he that calleth and believeth on him, shall not be confounded." Here let us fix, and not regard what men say, nor what they can do: but look unto Jesus "the author and finisher of our faith," firmly relying on his almighty goodness, who "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

CHAP. IV.

DANGER OF SALVATION IN THE CHURCH OF ROME.

THE HAZARD OF BEING SAVED IN THE CHURCH OF ROME.

A SERMON.

“ But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”—1 Cor. iii. 15.

THE context is thus, “ According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon: but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

In these words the Apostle speaks of a sort of persons, who held indeed the foundation of Christianity, but built upon it such doctrines or practices as would not bear the trial; which he expresses to us by “ wood, hay, and stubble,” which are not proof against the fire. Such a person, the Apostle tells us, hath brought himself into a very dangerous state, though he would not deny the possibility of his salvation; “ he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

That by fire here is not meant the fire of purgatory, as some pretend (who would be glad of any shadow of a text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams), I shall neither trouble you nor myself to manifest, since the particle of simi-

litude [ῶς] plainly shews that the Apostle did not intend an escape out of the fire literally, but like to that which men make out of a house or town that is on fire. Especially since very learned persons of the Church of Rome do acknowledge, that purgatory cannot be concluded from this text, nay, all that Estius contends for in this place is, that it cannot be concluded from hence that there is no purgatory; which we never pretended, but only that this text doth not prove it.

It is very well known, that this is a proverbial phrase, used not only in Scripture, but in profane authors, to signify "a narrow escape out of a great danger." He "shall be saved, yet so as by fire, διὰ πυρός, out of the fire." Just as διὰ νῦδαρος is used, 1 Peter iii. 20, where the Apostle speaking of the eight persons of Noah's family who escaped the flood, διεσώθησαν διὰ νῦδαρος, "they escaped out of the water." So here this phrase is to be rendered in the text, "he himself shall escape, yet so as out of the fire." The like expression you have, Amos iv. 11, "As a firebrand plucked out of the burning." And Jude 23, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." All which expressions signify the greatness of the danger, and the difficulty of escaping it, "as one who when his house at midnight is set on fire, and being suddenly waked leaps out of his bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him, but employing his whole care to save his body from the flames," as St. Chrysostom upon another occasion expresteth it. And so the Roman orator* (who it is likely did not think of purgatory) used this phrase; *Quo ex iudicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit*: From which judgment or sentence he escaped naked, as it were out of a burning. And one of the Greek orators tells us,† "that to save a man out of the fire, was a common proverbial speech."

From the words thus explained, the observation that naturally ariseth is this, "that men may hold all the fundamentals of Christian religion, and yet may superadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their salvation. What those things were which some among the Corinthians built upon the foundation of Christianity, whereby they endangered their salvation, we may probably conjecture by what the Apostle reproves in this Epistle, as the tolerating of incestuous marriages, communicating in idol-feasts, &c. And

* Tully.

† Aristides.

especially by the doctrine of the false Apostles, who at that time did so much disturb the peace of most Christian Churches, and who are so often and so severely reflected on in this Epistle. And what their doctrine was, we have an account, *Acts xv.*, *viz.* that they imposed upon the Gentile Christians circumcision, and the observation of the Jewish law, teaching "that unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved." So that they did not only build these doctrines upon Christianity, but they made them equal with the foundation, saying, that unless men believed and practised such things, they could not be saved.

In speaking to this observation, I shall reduce my discourse to these two heads.

1. I shall present to you some doctrines and practices which have been built upon the foundation of Christianity, to the great hazard and danger of men's salvation. And to be plain, I mean particularly the Church of Rome.

2. I shall inquire, whether our granting a possibility of salvation (though with great hazard) to those in the communion of the Roman Church, and their denying it to us, be a reasonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himself to that Church.

And there is the more reason to consider these things, when so many seducing spirits are so active and busy to pervert men from the truth; and when we see every day so many men and their religion so easily parted. For this reason these two considerations shall be the subject of the following discourse.

1. First, We will consider some doctrines and practices which the Church of Rome hath built upon the foundation of Christianity, to the great hazard and danger of men's salvation. It is not denied by the most judicious Protestants, but that the Church of Rome do hold all the articles of the Christian faith which are necessary to salvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a just ground of our separation from them, is the imposing of new doctrines and practices upon Christians as necessary to salvation, which were never taught by our Saviour or his Apostles, and which are either directly contrary to the doctrine of Christianity, or too apparently destructive of a good life. And I begin,

1. With their *doctrines*. And because I have no mind to aggravate lesser matters, I will single out four or five points of doctrine, which they have added to the Christian religion, and

which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apostles, nor owned in the first ages of Christianity. And the

First which I shall mention, and which being once admitted, makes way for as many errors as they please to bring in, is their doctrine of *infallibility*; and this they are very stiff and peremptory in, though they are not agreed among themselves where this infallibility is seated; whether in the Pope alone, or a Council alone, or in both together, or in the diffusive body of Christians. But they are sure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice against it? Can any man think that this privilege was at first conferred upon the Church of Rome, and that Christians in all ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it for determining their differences, and yet that very Church which hath enjoyed and used it so long, should now be at a loss where to find it? Nothing could have fallen out more unluckily, than that there should be such differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only means of ending all differences.

There is not the least intimation in Scripture of this privilege conferred upon the Roman Church, nor do the Apostles, in all their Epistles, ever so much as give the least directions to Christians, to appeal to the Bishop of Rome for a determination of the many differences, which even in those times happened among them. And it is strange they should be so silent in this matter, when there were so many occasions to speak of it, if our Saviour had plainly appointed such an infallible judge of controversies, for this very end, to decide the differences that should happen among Christians. It is strange that the ancient Fathers, in their disputes with heretics, should never appeal to this judge: nay, it is strange they should not constantly do it in all cases, it being so short and expedite a way for the ending of controversies. And this very consideration to a wise man is instead of a thousand arguments to satisfy him, that in those times no such thing was believed in the world.

Now this doctrine of infallibility, if it be not true, is of so much the more pernicious consequence to Christianity, because the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it, in all their errors, and gives them a pretence of assuming an authority to themselves, to impose their own fancies and mistakes upon the whole Christian world.

2. Their doctrine about *repentance*, which consists in con-

fessing their sins to the priest; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of contrition, does upon absolution received from the priest, put them into a state of salvation, though they have lived the most lewd and debauched lives that can be imagined, than which nothing can be more plainly destructive of a good life. For if this be true, all the hazard that the most wicked man runs of his salvation, is only the danger of so sudden a death, as gives him no space for confession and absolution. A case that happens so rarely, than any man that is strongly addicted to his lusts, will be content to venture his salvation upon this hazard; and all the arguments to a good life will be very insignificant to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when remission of sins may be had upon such cheap terms.

3. The doctrine of *purgatory*; by which they mean an estate of temporary punishments after this life, from which men may be released and translated into heaven by the prayers of the living, and the sacrifice of the mass. That this doctrine was not known in the primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as learned and eminent men as any of that Church, which is to acknowledge that it is a superstructure upon the Christian religion. And though in one sense it be indeed a building of gold and silver upon the foundation of Christianity, considering the vast revenues which this doctrine (and that of indulgences, which depends upon it) brings into that Church, yet I doubt not, but in the Apostle's sense, it will be found to be hay and stubble. But how groundless soever it be, it is too gainful a doctrine to be easily parted withal.

4. The doctrine of *transubstantiation*. A hard word, but I would to God that were the worst of it; the thing is much more difficult. I have taken some pains to consider other religions that have been in the world, and I must freely declare, that I never yet in any of them met with any article or proposition, imposed upon the belief of men, half so unreasonable and hard to be believed as this is: and yet this in the Romish Church is esteemed one of the most principal articles of the Christian faith, though there is no more certain foundation for it in Scripture, than for our Saviour's being substantially changed into all those things which are said of him, as that he is a rock, a vine, a door, and a hundred other things.

But this is not all. This doctrine hath not only no certain

foundation in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge against it, namely, that it undermines the very foundation of Christianity itself. And surely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the Christian doctrine, which destroys the reason of our belief of the whole. And that this doctrine does so, will appear evidently, if we consider what was the main argument which the Apostles used to convince the world of the truth of Christianity, and that was this, that our blessed Saviour, the author of this doctrine, wrought such and such miracles, and particularly that he rose again from the dead. And this they proved because they were eye-witnesses of his miracles, and had seen him and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses did deceive them in this matter? Then it cannot be denied but that the main proof of Christianity falls to the ground.

Well! we will now suppose (as the Church of Rome does) transubstantiation to have been one principal part of the Christian doctrine which the Apostles preached. But if this doctrine be true, then all men's senses are deceived in a plain sensible matter, wherein it is as hard for them to be deceived, as anything in the world. For two things can hardly be imagined more different, than a little bit of wafer, and the whole body of a man. So that the Apostles persuading men to believe this doctrine, persuaded them not to trust their senses; and yet the argument which they used to persuade them to this, was built upon the direct contrary principle, that men's senses are to be trusted. For if they be not, then, notwithstanding all the evidence the Apostles offered for the resurrection of our Saviour, he might not be risen, and so the faith of Christians was vain. So that they represent the Apostles as absurd as possible, *viz.* going about to persuade men out of their senses, by virtue of an argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of sense.

And now the matter is brought to a fair issue: if the testimony of sense be to be relied upon, then transubstantiation is false; if it be not, then no man is sure that Christianity is true. For the utmost assurance that the Apostles had of the truth of Christianity, was the testimony of their own senses concerning our Saviour's miracles, and this testimony every man hath against transubstantiation. From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no, not the Apostles themselves) had more reason to believe Christianity to be true, than every man hath to believe transubstantiation to be false. And we who

did not see our Saviour's miracles (as the Apostles did), and have only a credible relation of them, but do see the Sacrament, have less evidence of the truth of Christianity, than of the falsehood of transubstantiation.

But cannot God impose upon the senses of men, and represent things to them otherwise than they are ? Yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him ? Most certainly. But then we ought to be assured that he hath made such a revelation ; which assurance no man can have, the certainty of sense being taken away.

I shall press the business a little farther. Supposing the Scripture to be a Divine revelation, and that these words "this is my body," if they be in Scripture, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal sense ; I ask now, what greater evidence any man has, that these words "this is my body," are in the Bible, than every man has that the bread is not changed in the Sacrament ? Nay, no man has so much, for we have only the evidence of one sense that these words are in the Bible, but that the bread is not changed, we have the concurring testimony of several of our senses. In a word, if this be once admitted, then the senses of all men are deceived in one of the most plain sensible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a Divine revelation to men ; nor is there any way to confute the grossest impostures in the world : for if the clear evidence of all men's senses be not sufficient for this purpose, let any man, if he can, find a better and more convincing argument.

5. I will instance but in one doctrine more : and that shall be, their doctrine of *deposing kings in case of heresy*, and absolving their subjects from their allegiance to them. And this is not a mere speculative doctrine, but hath been put in practice many a time by the Bishops of Rome, as every one knows that is versed in history. For the troubles and confusions which were occasioned by this very thing, make up a good part of the history of several ages.

I hope that no body expects that I should take the pains to shew, that this was not the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, nor of the primitive Christians. The Papists are many of them so far from pretending this, that in some times and places, when it is not seasonable, and for their purpose, we have much ado to persuade them that ever it was their doctrine. But if transubstantiation be their doctrine, this is,

for they came both out of the same forge, I mean the Council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III. And if (as they tell us) transubstantiation was then established, so was this. And indeed one would think they were twins, and brought forth at the same time, they are so like one another, both of them so monstrously unreasonable.

II. I come now in the second place, to consider some *practices* of the Church of Rome, which I am afraid will prove as bad as her doctrines. I shall instance in these five.

1. Their celebrating of their *divine service in an unknown tongue*. And that not only contrary to the practice of the primitive Church, and to the great end and design of religious worship, which is the edification of those who are concerned in it (and it is hard to imagine how men can be edified by what they do not understand), but likewise in direct contradiction to St. Paul, who hath no less than a whole chapter wherein he confutes this practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly as anything is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this practice was not condemned by St. Paul, or that it was allowed and used in the first ages of Christianity, need not be ashamed to set up for the defence of any paradox in the world.

2. The *communion in one kind*. And that notwithstanding that even by their own acknowledgment our Saviour instituted it in both kinds, and the primitive Church administered it in both kinds. This I must acknowledge is no addition to Christianity, but a sacrilegious taking away of an essential part of the sacrament. For the cup is as essential a part of the institution as the bread, and they might as well, and by the same authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. Their *worshipping of images*. Which practice (notwithstanding all their distinctions about it, which are no other but what the heathens used in the same case) is as point-blank against the second Commandment, as a deliberate and malicious killing of a man is against the sixth. But if the case be so plain, a man would think that at least the teachers and guides of that Church should be sensible of it. Why, they are so, and afraid the people should be so too, and therefore in their ordinary Catechisms and manuals of devotion they leave out the second Commandment, and divide the tenth into two to make up the number; lest if the common people should know it, their consciences should start at the

doing of a thing so directly contrary to the plain command of God.

4. The *worshipping of the bread and wine in the Eucharist*, out of a false and groundless persuasion, that they are substantially changed into the body and blood of Christ. Which if it be not true (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the most incredible things in the whole world), then by the confession of several of their own learned writers, they are guilty of gross idolatry.

5. The *worship and invocation of saints and angels*; and particularly of the Virgin Mary, which hath now for some ages been a principal part of their religion. Now a man may justly wonder that so considerable a part of religion as they make this to be, should have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour anywhere speak one word concerning the worshipping of her? Nay, does he not take all occasions to restrain all extravagant apprehensions and imaginations concerning honour due to her, as foreseeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his mother and brethren were without: "Who," says he, "are my mother and my brethren? He that doeth the will of my Father, the same is my mother, my sister, and brother." And when the woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the blessed mother of our Lord, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!" Our Saviour diverts to another thing, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Does either our Saviour or his Apostles, in all their particular precepts and directions concerning prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to address ourselves to God, give the least intimation of praying to the Virgin Mary, or making use of her mediation? And can any man believe, that if this had been the practice of the Church from the beginning, our Saviour and his Apostles would have been so silent about so considerable a part of religion; insomuch that in all the Epistles of the Apostles, I do not remember that her name is so much as once mentioned? And yet the worship of her is at this day in the Church of Rome, and hath been so for several ages, a main part of their public worship, yea, and of their private devotions too; in which it is usual with them to say ten *Ave Maries* for one *Pater noster*; that is, for one prayer they make to Almighty God, they make ten addresses to the blessed Virgin; for that is the proportion observed in their rosaries. He that considers

this, and had never seen the Bible, would have been apt to think that there had been more said concerning her in Scripture, than either concerning God, or our blessed Saviour; and that the New Testament were full from one end to the other of precepts and exhortations to the worshipping of her; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to shew me so much as one sentence in the whole Bible that sounds that way. And there is as little in the Christian writers of the first three hundred years. The truth is, this practice began to creep in among some superstitious people about the middle of the fourth century: and I remember particularly, that Epiphanius, who lived about that time, calls it “the heresy of the women.”

And thus I have given you some instances of several doctrines and practices which the Church of Rome hath built upon the foundation of Christianity. Much more might have been said of them, but from what hath been said, any man may easily discern how dangerous they are to the salvation of men.

I proceed now in the second place,

II. To consider, whether our granting a possibility of salvation, though with great hazard, to those in the communion of the Romish Church, and their denying it to us, be a sufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to consider this, because this is the great popular argument whereby the emissaries and agents of that Church are wont to assault our people. “Your Church,” say they, “grants that a Papist may be saved; ours denies that a Protestant can be saved; therefore it is safest to be of our Church, in which salvation by acknowledgment of both sides is possible.”

For answer to this, I shall endeavour to shew, that this is so far from being a good argument, that it is so intolerably weak and sophistical, that any considerate man ought to be ashamed to be catched by it. For either it is good of itself, and sufficient to persuade a man to relinquish our Church, and to pass over to theirs, without entering into the merits of the cause on either side, and without comparing the doctrines and practices of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not sufficient of itself to persuade a man to leave our Church, without comparing the doctrines on both sides, then it is to no purpose, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of doctrines, the one appear

to be true, and the other false, this alone is a sufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true doctrine is found; and then there is no need of this argument.

If it be said that this argument is good in itself, without the examination of the doctrines of both Churches; this seems a very strange thing for any man to affirm, "That it is reason enough to a man to be of any Church, whatever her doctrines and practices be, if she do but damn those that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow a possibility of salvation in her communion."

But they who use this argument, pretend that it is sufficient of itself; and therefore I shall apply myself to shew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miserable weakness and insufficiency of it to satisfy any man's conscience or prudence to change his religion. And to this end I shall,

I. *Shew the weakness of the principle upon which this argument relies.*

II. *Give some parallel instances, by which it will clearly appear that it concludes false.*

III. *I shall take notice of some gross absurdities that follow from it.*

IV. *Shew how unfit it is to work upon those to whom it is propounded. And,*

V. *How improper it is to be urged by those that make use of it.*

I. *I shall shew the weakness of the principle upon which this argument relies;* and that is this, That whatever different parties in religion agree in, is safest to be chosen. The true consequence of which principle, if it be driven to the head, is to persuade men to forsake Christianity, and to make them take up in the principles of natural religion, for in these all religions do agree. For if this principle be true, and signify any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the several parties in religion differ; because that only is safe and prudent to be chosen wherein all agree. So that this argument, if the foundation of it be good, will persuade farther than those who make use of it desire it should do; for it will not only make men forsake the Protestant religion, but Popery too; and, which is much more considerable, Christianity itself.

II. I will give some parallel instances, by which it will clearly be seen that this argument concludes false. The Donatists denied the baptism of the Catholics to be good, but the Catholics acknowledged the baptism of the Donatists to be valid. So that both sides are agreed that the baptism of the Donatists was good; therefore the safest way for St. Austin and other Catholics (according to this argument) was to be baptized again by the Donatists, because by the acknowledgment of both sides, baptism among them was valid.

But to come nearer to the Church of Rome. Several in that Church hold the personal infallibility of the Pope, and the lawfulness of deposing and killing kings for heresy, to be *de fide*, that is, necessary articles of faith; and consequently, that whoever does not believe them, cannot be saved. But a great many Papists, though they believe these things to be no matters of faith, yet they think those that hold them may be saved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now, according to this argument, they ought all to be of their opinion in these points, because both sides are agreed, that "they that hold them may be saved;" but one side positively says, that "men cannot be saved if they do not hold them."

But my text furnishes me with as good an instance to this purpose as can be desired. St. Paul here in the text acknowledgeth the possibility of the salvation of those, who built hay and stubble upon the foundation of Christianity; that they might be saved, though with great difficulty, and, as it were, "out of the fire." But now among those builders with hay and stubble, there were those who denied the possibility of St. Paul's salvation, and of those who were of his mind. We are told of some who built the Jewish ceremonies and observances upon the foundation of Christianity, and said, that unless men were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. So that by this argument, St. Paul and his followers ought to have gone over to those Judaizing Christians, because it was acknowledged on both sides that they might be saved. But these Judaizing Christians were as uncharitable to St. Paul and other Christians, as the Church of Rome is now to us, for they said positively "that they could not be saved." But can any man think St. Paul would have been moved by this argument to leave a safe and certain way of salvation for that which was only possible, and that with great difficulty and hazard? The argument you see is

the very same, and yet it concludes the wrong way ; which plainly shews that it is a contingent argument, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therefore no man ought to be moved by it.

III. *I shall take notice of some gross absurdities that follow from it.* I shall mention but these two.

1. According to this principle, it is always safest to be on the uncharitable side. And yet uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true Christian, or a true Church, as a man would wish. Charity is one of the most essential marks of Christianity, and what the Apostle saith of particular Christians, is as true of whole Churches, that “though they have all faith, yet if they have not charity, they are nothing.”

I grant that no charity teacheth men to see others damned, and not to tell them the danger of their condition. But it is to be considered, that the damning of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it, the case must be wonderfully plain. And is it so in this matter ? They of the Church of Rome cannot deny, but that we embrace all the doctrines of our Saviour contained in the Apostles’ Creed, and determined by the four first General Councils, and yet they will not allow this and a good life to put us within a possibility of salvation, because we will not submit to all the innovations they would impose upon us. And yet I think there is scarce any doctrine or practice in difference between them and us, which some or other of their most learned writers have not acknowledged either not to be sufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practised by the primitive Church ; so that nothing can excuse their uncharitableness towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this argument, for they do what in them lies to make themselves no Christians, that they may prove themselves the truer and more Christian Church. A medium which we do not desire to make use of.

2. If this argument were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the world to agree with him in an error which another does not account damnable, whatever it be, provided he do but damn all those that do not hold it ; and there wants nothing but confidence and uncharitableness to do this. But is there any sense, that another man’s boldness and want of charity should be an argument to move me to be of his opinion ? I cannot illustrate this better, than by the difference between the skilful physician and a mountebank. A learned

and skilful physician is modest, and speaks justly of things : he says, that such a method of cure which he hath directed is safe ; and withal, that that which the mountebank prescribes may possibly do the work, but there is great hazard and danger in it ; but the mountebank, who never talks of any thing less than infallible cures (and always the more mountebank, the stronger pretence to infallibility), he is positive that that method which the physician prescribes will destroy the patient, but his receipt is infallible and never fails. Is there any reason in this case, that this man shall carry it merely by his confidence ? And yet if this argument be good, the safest way is to reject the physician's advice, and to stick to the mountebank's. For both sides are agreed that there is a possibility of cure in the mountebank's method, but not in the physician's ; and so the whole force of the argument lies in the confidence of an ignorant man.

IV. *This argument is very unfit to work upon those to whom it is propounded* : for either they believe we say true in this, or not. If they think we do not, they have no reason to be moved by what we say. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we say in this matter ; namely, that though it be possible for some in the communion of the Roman Church to be saved, yet it is very hazardous ; and that they are in a safe condition already in our Church. And why then should a bare possibility, accompanied with infinite and apparent hazard, be an argument to any man to run into that danger ?

Lastly, *This argument is very improper to be urged by those who make use of it*. Half of the strength of it lies in this, that we Protestants acknowledge, that it is possible a Papist may be saved. But why should they lay any stress upon this ? What matter is it what we heretics say, who are so damnably mistaken in all other things ? Methinks if there were no other reason, yet because we say it, it should seem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive when it serves for their purpose, we have some little credit and authority among them.

By this time I hope every one is in some measure satisfied of the weakness of this argument, which is so transparent, that no wise man can honestly use it, and he must have a very odd understanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is a casual and contingent argument, and sometimes it concludes right, and oftener wrong ; and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except only in one case, when all things are so

equal on both sides, that there is nothing else in the whole world to determine him ; which surely can never happen in matters of religion necessary to be believed. No man is so weak, as not to consider in the change of his religion, the merits of the cause itself ; as not to examine the doctrines and practices of the Churches on both sides ; as not to take notice of the confidence and charity of both parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conscientious and a prudent man : and if upon inquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either side, then this argument is needless, and comes too late, because the work is already done without it.

Besides, that the great hazard of salvation in the Roman Church (which we declare upon account of the doctrines and practices which I have mentioned) ought to deter any man much more from that religion, than the acknowledged possibility of salvation in it ought to encourage any man to the embracing of it. Never did any Christian Church build so much hay and stubble upon the foundation of Christianity, and therefore those that are saved in it, must be saved, as it were, out of the fire. And though purgatory be not meant in the text, yet it is a doctrine very well suited to their manner of building ; for there is need of an *ignis purgatorius*, of a fire to try their work what it is, and to burn up their hay and stubble. And I have so much charity (and I desire always to have it) as to hope, that a great many among them who lived piously, and have been almost inevitably detained in that Church, by the prejudice of education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a general repentance, find mercy with God : and though their works suffer loss and be burnt, yet they themselves may escape, as out of the fire. But as for those who had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth, if they continue in the errors of that Church, or apostatize from the truth, I think their condition so far from being safe, that there must be extraordinary favourable circumstances in their case, to give a man hopes of their salvation.

I have now done with the two things I propounded to speak to ; and I am sorry that the necessary defence of our religion, against the restless importunities and attempts of our adversaries, upon all sorts of persons, hath engaged me to spend so much time in matters of dispute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witnesses, that I have constantly made it my business, in this great presence and assembly, to plead against the impieties

and wickedness of men, and have endeavoured, by the best arguments I could think of, to gain men over to a firm belief and serious practice of the main things of religion. And I do assure you, I had much rather persuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of Christians whatsoever. For I doubt not, but the belief of the ancient Creed, provided we entertain nothing that is destructive of it, together with a good life, will certainly save a man; and without this no man can have reasonable hopes of salvation, no not in an infallible Church, if there were any such thing to be found in the world.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent observer of the genius and humour of the several sects and professions in religion; and upon the whole matter, I do in my conscience believe the Church of England to be the best constituted Church this day in the world; and that as to the main, the doctrine and government and worship of it, are excellently framed to make men soberly religious; securing men, on the one hand, from the wild freaks of enthusiasm; and on the other, from the gross follies of superstition. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above several professions that we know in the world, that it acknowledgeth a due and just subordination to the civil authority, and hath always been untainted in its loyalty.

And now shall every trifling consideration be sufficient to move a man to relinquish such a Church? There is no greater disparagement to a man's understanding, no greater argument of a light and ungenerous mind, than rashly to change one's religion. Religion is our greatest concernment of all other, and it is not every little argument, no, nor a great noise about infallibility, nothing but very plain and convincing evidence, that should sway a man in this case. But they are utterly inexcusable, who make a change of such concernment upon the insinuations of one side only, without ever hearing what can be said for the Church they were baptized and brought up in, before they leave it. They that can yield thus easily to the impressions of every one that hath a design and interest to make proselytes, may at this rate of discretion change their religion twice a day, and instead of morning and evening prayer, they may have a morning and evening religion. Therefore, for God's sake, and for our own soul's sake, and for the sake of our reputation, let us consider, and shew ourselves men; let us not suffer ourselves to be shaken and carried

away with every wind. Let us not run ourselves into danger when we may be safe. Let us stick to the foundation of religion, the articles of our common belief, and build upon them gold, and silver, and precious stones, I mean, the virtues and actions of a good life ; and if we would do this, we should not be apt to set such a value upon hay and stubble. If we would sincerely endeavour to live holy and virtuous lives, we should not need to cast about for a religion which may furnish us with easy and indirect ways to get to heaven.

I will conclude all with the Apostle's exhortation : " therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

" Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will ; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THE POPISH RULE OF FAITH

EXAMINED AND DISPROVED.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

THE POPISH RULE OF FAITH EXAMINED AND DISPROVED, AS
RESTING UPON THEIR DOCTRINE OF INFALLIBILITY.

BOOK II.

— As resting upon the Authority of General
COUNCILS.

BOOK III.

— As resting upon TRADITION.

BOOK I.

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

A GUIDE IN MATTERS OF FAITH,

WITH RESPECT, ESPECIALLY, TO THE ROMISH PRETENCE OF
THE NECESSITY OF SUCH AN ONE AS IS INFALLIBLE.

CHAP. I.

*The Question itself. The Resolution of it in Six Propositions
here named.*

THE design of this discourse is, the resolution of the following query.

“Whether a man who liveth where Christianity is professed, and refuseth to submit his judgment to the infallibility of any guide on earth, and particularly to the Church or Bishop of Rome, hath, notwithstanding that refusal, sufficient means still left him, whereby he may arrive at certainty in those doctrines which are generally necessary to the salvation of a Christian man ?”

Satisfaction in this inquiry is of great moment; for it relateth to our great end, and to the way which leads to it: and it nearly concerneth both the Romanists and the Reformed. If there be not such a guide, the estate of the Romanists is extremely dangerous; for then the blind take the blind for their unerring leaders; and being once misled, they wander on without correcting their error, having taken up this first as their fixed principle, that their guide cannot mistake the way. On the other hand, if God hath set up in his Church a light so very clear and steady as is pretended; the Reformed

are guilty of great presumption, and expose themselves to great uncertainty, by shutting their eyes against it.

Now there lies before men a double temptation to a belief of the being of such a guide in the Christian Church ; sloth, and vicious humility of mind. Sloth inclineth men rather to take up in an implicit faith, than to give themselves the trouble of a strict examination of things. For there is less pain in credulity, than in bending of the head by long and strict attention and severe study.

Also there is a show of humility in the deference which our understandings pay unto authority ; especially to that which pretends to be, under Christ, supreme on earth. Although, in the paying of it without good reason first understood, men are not humble but slavish.

But these temptations prevail not upon honest and considerate minds, which inquire, without prejudice, after truth, and submit to the powerful evidence of it. Such will resolve the question in the affirmative : and they may reasonably so do by considering these propositions which I shall treat of in their order.

First, The Christian Church never yet wanted, nor shall it ever want, either the doctrines of necessary faith, or the belief and profession of them.

Secondly, Wheresoever God requireth the belief of them, he giveth means sufficient for information and unerring assent.

Thirdly, Whatsoever those means are, every man's personal reason giveth to the mind that last weight which turneth deliberation into faith.

Fourthly, The means which God hath given us towards necessary faith and the certainty of it, is not the authority of any infallible guide on earth.

Yet, Fifthly, All ecclesiastical guidance is not to be rejected, in our pursuance of the doctrines of Christian faith, in the finding out or stating of which it is a very considerable help.

Sixthly, By the help of it, and principally as it offers to us the holy Scriptures in the quality of the rule of faith, we have means sufficient to lead us to certainty in that belief which is necessary to life eternal.

CHAP. II.

The three first Propositions proved and illustrated.

Prop. I. FIRST, The acknowledgment and profession of the necessary doctrines of the Christian faith, are annexed inseparably to the Christian Church.

There is but one faith ; and according to the saying of Leo the Great,* “ If it be not one, it is not at all :” for it cannot be contrary to itself. And though it be but one, yet men of differing creeds pretend to it, as there are some who will shew in several places, the one seamless coat of Christ.†

This one faith never did, nor ever shall in all places, fail.

The Apostles were themselves without error, both in their own assent to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and in the delivery of them.

They heard the oracles of Christ from his own mouth, and they were witnesses of his resurrection ; and they spake‡ what they had “ seen and heard.” And they gave to the world assurance of the truth, by the miraculous signs of their Apostolical office. And if they had not had such assurance themselves, and could not have given proof to others of their mission, there would have been a defect in the first promulgation of the Gospel ; and such as could not afterwards have been amended. That which, at first, had been delivered with uncertainty, would, with greater uncertainty, have been conveyed down to after ages ; and men, who in process of time, graft error upon certain truth, would much more have grafted error upon uncertain opinion.

Ever since the Apostles’ times there has been true faith, and the profession of it in the catholic Church : and it will be so till faith shall expire, and men shall see Him on whom they before believed. For a Church cannot subsist without the fundamentals of Christianity : and Christ hath sealed this truth with his promise, that there shall be a Church as long as this world continues.§ I mean by a Church, a visible

* *Nisi una est fides, non est.* L. M. Ser. 23. [Ser. 24. vol. 1. p. 82. Venet. 1753.]

† See Ferrand. l. 1. c. 1. sect. 4. *disquis. Relig.*

‡ *Acts iv. 19, 20.*

§ *Matth. xxviii. 20.*

society of Christians, both ministers and people; for public worship on earth cannot be invisible.

But the true faith and profession of it is not fixed to any place, or to any succession of men in it. God's providence has written the contrary in the very ashes of the Seven Churches of the lesser Asia.

Neither is any particular Church, though so far infallible in fundamentals as to be preserved from actual error, an infallible rule to all other Christians. If they follow the doctrine of it, they err not, because it is true; but if they follow that Church as an unerring guide or canon, they mistake in the rule and motive of their faith. For that particular Church which teacheth truth, might possibly have erred, and the Church which errs, might have shined with the true light. But the whole Church cannot so err in any age; for then the very being of a Church would cease.

Neither doth it hence follow, that the faith of the Roman Church, when Luther arose, was the only true and certain doctrine. For that Church was not then the only visible Church on earth. There were visible witnesses of catholic truth dispersed throughout the very Churches in communion with the Roman, bearing their testimony against her corruptions. Some of the Greek Churches also were then more visible than now they are, and more orthodox: the rich Papacy having much prevailed upon their necessities by arguments gilded with interest. Besides, if our forefathers under the Papacy embraced the truth faith, we have it still; the faith not being removed, but the corruption. Their question therefore "Where was your religion before Luther?" is not more pertinent amongst disputers, than this is amongst husbandmen, "Where was the corn before it was weeded?" though the tares were more than the wheat.

Prop. II. We have seen that necessary faith is perpetual, and it is as manifest, that wheresoever God requireth the belief of it, he vouchsafeth sufficient means for information, and unerring assent.

Of all he does not require this belief, for to all the Gospel is not preached, and where it is preached, there are infants, and persons of age so distempered in mind, as to remain unavoidably children in understanding.

And though the same sum of doctrines is generally necessary to salvation, yet the creed of all men is not of equal length, seeing they have unequal capacities.

But wheresoever there is a particular society of men, who call themselves a Church, yet err actually in the necessary articles of the faith, it is certain they were not forced into that error for want of external means. For the just Judge of the world would never have required unity in the faith upon pain of his eternal displeasure, if he had not given to men power sufficient for such unity. No tyrant on earth has been guilty of such undisguised injustice as that is, which maketh a law for the punishment of the blind, because they miss their way. The articles of Christian religion come not to the mind by natural reason, but by faith, and faith comes by hearing or reading ; and where these means are not offered, a man is rather an ignorant person than an unbeliever. Wherefore our Saviour told the perverse Jews,* that if the Messiah had never been revealed to them, they had not been answerable for the sin of infidelity ; but that, since he was come to them, and by them despised, their infidelity was blackened with great aggravation.

Prop. III. The means then are sufficient, wheresoever the end is absolutely required ; but whatsoever those means are, the act of assent is to be ultimately resolved into each man's personal reason. For no man can believe or assent but upon some ground or motive which appears credible to him. He could not believe, unless he had some reason or other why he believed. "When all is done," said Mr. Thorndike,† "men must and will be judges for themselves." I do not quote the saying because it is extraordinary, but because that learned man said it, who was careful to pay to authority its minutest dues. If a man believes upon authority, he hath a further reason for the believing of it. He is not willing to take pains in examining that which is proposed to him ; or he thinks himself of less ability in understanding, than those from whom he borrows his light. If he desireth another to judge for him, his choice is determined by the opinion he hath conceived of him. Every man has his reason, though it be a weak one, and such as cannot justify itself or him. Something at last turns the balance, though it be but a feather.

This the Romanists own as well as the Reformed ; and one‡ of the more judicious of them submits his many quotations, and his reasonings and refinings upon them, to the discretion of every private peruser, saying, "I desire the reader's faith to

* John xv. 22, 24.

† To the Reader of the Disc. of Govern. of Churches.

‡ R. H. Rom. Doct. of Repen. vind. p. 2.

my words no further than the following testimonies make it appear."

But such appeals touch them very inwardly in the case of a new convert. To induce a man of another particular Church to embrace their communion, they submit these weighty points to his private judgment: What is a true Church, and which are the marks of it? What is the Roman Church? And whether the marks of the true Church do only belong unto the Romans? What men or what books speak the sense of that Church? They tell us,* "That the light of a man's own reason first serves him so far as to the discovery of a guide; also, that in this discovery the Divine Providence hath left it so clear and evident, that a sincere and unbiassed quest cannot miscarry." But when once this guide is found out, the man is afterwards, "for all other things that are prescribed by this guide, to subjeet and resign his reason." As if it were not as difficult to judge of such a guide, as of his direction. It is so, but it is not owned. Wherefore, though at the conference betwixt the Bishop of Meaux and Monsieur Claude, before Mademoiselle de Duras, the argument of the debate (sufficiently obscure as it was managed) was submitted to that lady; yet in the close† upon her conversion, the Bishop exhorted her to receive the true sense of the Scripture from the Church without examination.

It seems the Roman Church is like a cave, into which a man has light enough to enter; but when once he is entered he is in thick darkness.

CHAP. III.

*The fourth proposition proved by several considerations.
Here of the three first. No infallible living guide given
to the Jewish Church, or promised to the Christian. No
direction anywhere given for the finding of him.*

Prop. IV. BUT how subservient soever our reason may be to our faith, the means which God hath given us towards the certain attaining of it, is not the authority of any infallible guide on earth.

* R. H. Guide in Controv. in Pref. p. 3.

† Conf. avec M. Cl. 1678. p. 113, 114.—Qu' elle recevroit de l'Eglise,
Sans Examiner, le vray sens de l'Ecriture.

This will not be disbelieved by those who weigh well the following considerations.

Consid. I. First, God did not set up such a constant, infallible guide among the Jews ; though at first he gave assurance to them by miracle, that Moses had received his commission from him, and had brought to them the tables which he had written for their direction, with his own finger.

Some of the Sanhedrim were of the sect of the Sadducees, who erred in the fundamental point of a future state. Most of them erred in the quality of the Messiah, not considering their Scriptures so much as their traditions. And of the errors of the Levitical priesthood, there is in the Old Testament* frequent mention, and great complaint. And the Prophet Malachi† as soon as he had said, “the priest’s lips should keep knowledge,” he adds this reproof, “but ye are departed out of the way.”

It is true, the Israelites were by God directed in difficult cases to an assembly of judges.‡ But they were not judges of controversies in doctrine, but in property. To their sentence the people were to submit, as to an expedient for peace,§ though judgment might be perverted or mistaken.

It must be also confessed, that God spake to them by the oracle of Urim, and that the voice of it was infallible. But its answers concerned not the necessary rudiments of the Mosaic law, but emergencies in their civil affairs ; those especially of peace and war.

But if we admit that there was under Judaism a living infallible guide ; it does not thence follow, that it must be so under Christianity. For their small precinct (the people of which were thrice in a year to come up to the temple) was much more capable of such a judge than the Christian Church, which is as wide as the world. Also the new revelation is more clear and distinct than the old one was, and stands not in such need of an interpreter.

Consid. II. Secondly, God hath no where promised Christians such a judge : He hath no where said that he hath given such an one to the Christian Church. And seeing such an one cannot be had without God’s supernatural assistance, the most knowing amongst men being subject both to error and falsehood ; it is great arrogance, whilst the Scripture

* Isaiah iv. 10. Jer. ii. 8. Ezek. vii. 26. xxii. 26.

† Mal. ii. 7, 8. ‡ Deut. xvii. 8 to 12. § See Levit. iv. 13.

is silent, to say he is in being. And to affirm that if there were not such a guide, God would be wanting in means sufficient for the maintenance of peace and truth, is presumptuously to obtrude the schemes of man's fancy upon God's wisdom. He can govern his Church without our methods.

Now God hath no where promised such a judge to Christian men; though he hath promised help on earth, and assistance from heaven to men diligent and sincere in their inquiries after truths which are necessary for them.

There are two places of Scripture, which are by some taken for promises of such a nature, though they were not by the Divine wisdom so intended.

Of these, the first is that which was spoken by Christ unto St. Peter,* "The gates of hell shall not prevail against" the Church. Which promise concerneth the Church in general, and the necessary faith of it, and not any particular persons, or places, or succession of persons in them.

And Christ doth here assure us, that the gates of the grave shall not swallow up the Church; that it shall not enter in at them; that it shall not die or perish. But he doth not say he will preserve it by the means of any earthly infallible guide. He can by other ways continue it till time itself shall fail.

The other place of Scripture is the promise of Christ a little while before his ascension into the heavens. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world :"† as long as this age of the Messiah shall last, and that is the last time or age. This promise is indeed made to the Apostles, and to their successors also. But it is a promise of general assistance; and it is made upon condition that they go forth and make disciples of all men of all nations, and baptize them, and give them further instruction in the things which Christ gave in charge to them. And some of the successors of the Apostles have not performed these conditions;‡ and the governor of the Church of Sardis had not held fast what he had received and heard.

As God hath not promised an unerring guide, so neither hath he said he hath set up such an one in any Church on earth.

He hath not said it either directly, or by consequence.

The places which are supposed directly to affirm this, are two, and both mistaken.

* Matth. xvi. 18.

† Matth. xxviii. 20.

‡ Rev. iii. 1, 2, 3.

One of them is that of Christ to his disciples, after he had given commission to them to preach the Gospel,* “He that heareth you, heareth me;” me the infallible way and the truth.

This speech, if it be extended to all ministers, it makes them all infallible guides. And it is certain they are so, as long as they deliver to the people what they received from Christ. But the words are especially directed to the seventy disciples who were taught to preach a plain fundamental truth, that the “kingdom of God was come nigh to the Jews.”† And these disciples were able to give to the Jews a demonstration of the truth of that doctrine which they taught, by miraculous signs: “by healing the sick,”‡ and “doing among them mighty works.”

Another place used as an express testimony, is that in the first to Timothy,§ to whom St. Paul saith, that the Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” But this place also is misapplied. It seemeth to be spoken of that Church of Ephesus, in which St. Paul advised Timothy to behave himself with singular care; which place hath so far failed, that the lofty building called St. John’s Church,|| is now become a Turkish mosque. But if it were spoken in a general sense, it would amount only to this meaning: a Christian Church is like a pillar sustained by a pedestal, on which a writing is so fixed, that all who pass by may see it. It is (as Jerusalem once was to the heathen world) a city on a hill: it is a visible society which giveth notice to Jews and Gentiles of Christianity, and is instrumental to awaken their observation, and by their sense to prepare the way to their belief. For this advertisement being so publicly given to them, they have fair occasion of examining the grounds of Christian truth, which when they find, they will be induced to build upon them. In this sense likewise, though not in this alone, Apostolical men were called lights and pillars. In the book of the Revelation¶ this promise is made to him who persevereth in his Christianity, notwithstanding the cross which it brings upon him. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem” (or the Christian Church).

* Luke x. 16.

§ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

¶ Rev. iii. 12.

† Luke x. 1, 9.

|| Ryc. of the Greek Church, p. 44.

‡ Ver. 13.

And St. Chrysostom* gives St. Paul the titles of the “light of the Churches,” the “foundation of the faith,” the “pillar and ground of truth.” The governors of the Church do ministerially exhibit Christian truth; they do not by mere authority impose it.

Among the places which are said to prove, by good consequence, that there is a living guide of faith, that in the eighteenth of St. Matthew’s Gospel† is the principal.

There our Saviour requireth his followers, if their brethren persisted in their offences, to “tell it to the Church,” and to esteem them no longer members of their society, if they despised the sentence of it. From whence they conclude with strange inadvertence, that such a decree is therefore infallible.

But our Lord speaks of their brother’s trespasses against them, and not of his heresy :‡ and of the discipline, and not of the doctrine, either of the synagogue or the Church. In which case, if we submit, even where there is error in the sentence, for peace sake, and because we are come to the last appeal, we worthily sacrifice private good to public order. And such submission is safe in point of property, though not in point of doctrine; for we may, without sin, depart from our property, but not from our faith.

Now much of this that hath been said in order to the explication of the foregoing places, might have been well omitted, if I had designed this little discourse for the use only of such Romanists as had been conversant with the writings of the Fathers. For then I should have needed only to have cited those ancients, and shewed that their sense of these several places was plainly different from the modern interpretations of the churchmen of Rome. And, by this way of arguing, they are self-condemned. For they fall, according to their own rule of expounding Scripture, by the unanimous consent of the primitive Fathers, who with one voice speak another sense. Those who doubt of this, may receive satisfaction from the learned letters of Monsieur Launoy.§

Consid. III. If God had promised an infallible guide, or told us he had given one to his Church, he would, doubtless,

* 1 Cor. ix. 2.—τὸ φῶς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, ὁ Θεοῦ λόγος τῆς πίστεως ὁ στυλος, &c.

† Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

‡ Matth. xviii. 15.

§ Launoy in Epist. ad Carol. magistrum, [vol. 5. par. 2. p. 1. Colon. Allob. 1731.] ad Jacob Bevil. [Ibid. p. 71, &c.] ad Guil. Voell. [Ibid. p. 99, &c.] ad Raim. Formentinum, [Ibid. p. 125, &c.] in 5 par. Epist.

have added some directions for the finding of him. For, to say in general, you shall have a star which will always guide you without all dangerous error; and not to inform us in what part of the firmament it is to be seen, is to amuse rather than to promise.

Now, God hath no where given us such direction. He hath no where pointed us to this Church, or that Council; to this person, or that local succession of men. He hath not said, the guide is at Antioch or Jerusalem, at Nice or Constantinople, at Rome or Avignon.

You will say, he hath directed us to St. Peter. I answer, no more than to the rest of the Apostles, to whom he gave equal power in their ordination;* all of whom he made equally shepherds of the flock;† to all of whom he gave equal commission to make proselytes of all nations.‡ And in this sense St. Chrysostom§ affirmed concerning St. Paul: "That the whole world [or the world of the Roman empire] was his diocese." You will reply, that he promised, on him particularly, upon this rock or stone, this Kypha (a Syriac word of the masculine gender),|| this Peter, to build his Church. I answer, the ancients took the word as feminine,¶ and understood it rather of his confession than of his person. If it was spoken of his person, it was spoken by way of emphasis, not exclusion; for there were twelve foundations.** Of these he might be called the first, having first preached the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles,†† the eleven standing up with him, and he speaking as the mouth of the Apostolical college.

* John xx. 21.

+ Matth. ix. 36. x. 6. 1 Pet. v. 2.

† Matth. xxviii. 16, 17, 18, 19.

§ S. Chrys. in 1 Cor. ix. 2. Τὴν οἰκουμένην ἡπασαν ἐγεχειρισμένος,
&c.

|| See R. H. Guide in Controv. Dis. 1. p. 5. and Socin. in Loc.

¶ S. Hil. de Trin. 1. 6. dixit Petrus, Tu es filius Dei, &c. super hanc igitur Confession. Petram Ecclesiae sedificatio est. [vol. 2. p. 160. Veron. 1730.] v. Launoy in Epist. ad Voellum. [Ut supra.]

** Rev. xxi. 14. Ephes. ii. 20.

†† Acts ii. 14, 41, 47.

CHAP. IV.

The fourth Consideration. Five pretended guides enumerated, and found insufficient.

Consid. IV. WE cannot by the strictest enumeration, find out any living infallible guide existing in any age after St. Peter and the other Apostles in the Christian Church.

1. This guide could not be the Church diffusive of the first ages. For the suffrages of every Christian were never gathered. And if we will have their sense, they must rise from the dead and give it us.

2. This guide cannot be the faith (as such) of all the governors of all the primitive Churches. The sum of it was never collected. There were anciently general Creeds, but such as especially related to the heresies then on foot; and who can affirm upon grounds of certainty, that each bishop in the world consented to each article, or to each so expressed?

3. This guide is not a Council perfectly free and universal. For a guide which cannot be had, is none. If such a Council could assemble, it would not err in the necessities of faith. For there cannot be a regular flock without a shepherd; and if all the spiritual shepherds in the world should at once, and by consent, go so much astray, the whole flock of the Church catholic would be scattered: and that would contradict the promise of Christ the supreme, faithful, infallible Pastor. But there never was yet an universal Council properly so called; neither can we suppose the probability of it, but by supposing the being of one temporal Christian monarch of the world, who might call, or suffer it. In the Councils called General, if we speak comparatively, there were not many southern or western bishops present at them. It was thus, at the first **Ecumenical Council**, the Council of Nice; though, in one sacred place (as Eusebius* hath noted), there were assembled Syrians and Cilicians, Phoenicians and Arabians, Palæstinians, Egyptians, Thebæans, Libyans, Mesopotamians; a Persian, a Seythian bishop; and many others from other countries. But there was but one bishop for Africa, one for

* Euseb. l. 3. vit. Const. c. 7, 8. p. 487. [Par. 1659.] Socrat. E. H. l. 1. c. 8. p. 19. [Par. 1668.]

Spain, one for Gaul ; two priests as deputies of the infirm and aged bishop of Rome. Whilst (for instance sake) there were seventeen bishops for the small province of Isauria.* Yet such Councils are very useful ; such we reverence ; but God did not set them up as the only and the infallible guides of faith. If these were such guides, what guided the Church which was before them ? By what rule was Ebion judged before the Council of Nice ? How can we be infallibly guided by them in controversies of faith not determined by them ; nay, not brought before them ; nay, scarce moved till these latter days ? Such (for the purpose) are the controversies about the virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, and of justification by the faith of mere recumbence upon his merits. Or how shall a private man who errs in the faith, be delivered from his heresy, seeing he may die some years ere a Council can assemble, or being assembled, can form its decrees ? Arius vented his heresy about ten years before the Council of Nice was called for the suppressing of it. And soon after he had given vent to it, it spread throughout Egypt and Libya, and the upper Thebes, as Socrates† has reported : and in a short time many other provinces and cities were infected with the contagion of it. And in the pretended Council of Trent, no less than five Popes were successively concerned ; and it lasted in several places longer than two legal lives of a man.‡ There was indeed a canon in the Western Church§ for the holding of a Council once in the space of each ten years : but that canon has not been hitherto obeyed ; and, as affairs stand in the Church, it is impracticable. For the Pope will exclude all the Greek and Reformed bishops ; he will crowd the assembly with bishops of his own creation ; and with abbots also ; he will not admit of former Councils unless they serve his purpose ; not so much as that of Nice itself.|| He will be the judge, though about his own supremacy. He will multiply Italians and others, who upon oath¶ owe their votes to him. He will not hold a Council upon the terms approved by all Romish princes. Nor did they agree at their last Council ; the Emperor would not

* V. Concil. Labb. tom. 2. p. 50, &c. [Lut. Par. 1672.]

† Socr. Eccl. Hist. 1. 1. c. 6. p. 9. ‡ From A. 1545 to A. 1563.

§ V. Concil. Const. sess. 39. [Labbe, Conc. ut supra, vol. 12. p. 238.]

|| V. Greg. Mag. Ep. 6. 31. [Ibid. vol. 5. p. 1277.] Leo I. Ep. 53. [Ibid. vol. 4. p. 844.] Gelas. I. Ep. 13. [Ibid. vol. 4. p. 1199.]

¶ Concil. Labb. tom. 10. p. 23. 379. [Ibid.] et Pontific. Roman. [p. 605. Rom. 1695.]

send his bishops to Bologna, nor the French king his to Trent. Although the French Church believed the doctrines of that Synod, yet they did not receive them from the authority of it, but they embraced them as the former doctrines of the Roman Church. And the Parisian faculty* prepared the way to the Articles of Trent.

Notwithstanding all this, we firmly believe, that at least the first four General Councils did not err in faith ; and it is pious to think, that God would not suffer so great a temptation in the Church on earth. Yet still we believe those Councils not to be infallible in their constitution, but so far as they followed an infallible rule. For the greatest truth is not always with the greatest number : and great numbers may appear on contrary sides. The Council of Constantinople under Constantine Copronymus deserved that name which was of old given to it, of "the Holy, Great, Ecumenical Seventh Synod." It consisted of three hundred and thirty-eight bishops lawfully assembled : and whereas it is said, "that none of the patriarchs joined with them,"† it is very fallaciously spoken; for Anastasius, patriarch of Constantinople, was lately dead ; the three others of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, were prevented by the Saracens. The Pope was desired to be present, but refused. He was then forming a league with Pepin, against Constantine, and greedy of the spoil of the exarchate of Ravenna. This great Council unanimously decreed against the "use of images in churches." Yet the second Synod of Nice, consisting of about three hundred and fifty bishops, determined for it. And awhile after, in the West, the Council of Frankfurt, consisting of about three hundred bishops, reversed that decree. And, after that, the Council of Trent did re-establish it ; though there the voting persons were not fifty. With such uncertain doubles of belief must they move who follow a guide in religion, without reference to a further rule.

Object. But here there is offered to us, by the Guide in Controversies,‡ "an objection, of which this is the sum. The fifth canon of the Church of England does declare, that the Thirty-nine Articles were agreed upon for the avoidance of the diversities of opinions, and the establishing of consent touching true religion. Consent touching true religion is con-

* A.D. 1542, in Coll. Sorb. See Richer. H. Conc. general. vol. 4. p. 162, 163, &c. [Colon. 1681.]

† R. H. Guide, disc. 2. p. 109.

‡ R. H. Annot. on D. Still. Answer, p. 82, 83.

sent in matters of faith. Establishing of consent relateth both to laity and clergy. The third and fourth canons of 1640, decree the excommunication of those who will not abjure their holding Popery and Socinianism. The Reformed Churches in France teach the like doctrine, threatening to cut them off from the Church who acquiesce not in the resolution of a National Synod.* The same course was taken with the Remonstrants in the Synod of Dort.† Wherefore Protestants ought not to detract from the authority of General Councils, whilst they assume to themselves so great a power in their particular Synods.”

Answer. The force of this objection is thus removed: Every Church hath power of admitting or excluding members, else it hath not means sufficient to its end, the order and concord of its body. Every particular Church ought to believe that it does not err in its definitions; for it ought not to impose any known error upon its members. But though it believes it does not err, it does not believe it upon this reason, because God hath made it an infallible guide; but rather for this, because it hath sincerely and with God’s assistance followed a rule which is infallible. And, upon this supposition, it imposeth doctrines, and excludeth such as with contumacay dissent from them.‡

4. This guide is not the present Church declaring to particular Christians the sense of the Church of former ages. How can this declaration be made, seeing Churches differ, and each Church calls itself the true one, and pretendeth to the primitive pattern? The Church of Rome hath, on her side, the suffrages of all the Councils and Fathers; the first, the middle, the last, if Campian the Jesuit may be believed.§ On the other hand Monsieur Larroque hath written a book of the conformity of the Protestant Churches in France, with the discipline of the ancient Christian Church, taking it for granted that their doctrine was catholic. And we likewise pretend both to the doctrine and discipline of it. All of us cannot be in the right. The Roman Church, without any proof, calleth herself the Church catholic; and she pretendeth to convey to us the sense of the ancient Fathers and Councils; which sense

* Art. 31. Ch. 5. du consistoire si un ou plusieurs, &c.

† Syn. Dord. sess. 138. [p. 323. Dordr. 1620.]

‡ See Artic. 20, 21, 34.

§ Camp. Rat. 3. p. 180. [Rat. 4. p. 55. Antv. 1631.] Rat. 5. p. 185. [Ibid. p. 70.]

was that which they understood formerly by the word tradition.* And in this sense a Romanist said of Pope Honorius,† “ that he had broken the rule of tradition.” But how can we esteem that Church a faithful representer of the sense of the ancients, whilst the Reformed consult the ancients with equal ability, and find a contrary sense in them ? Whilst the Church of Rome,‡ by a kind of ecclesiastical coinage, stampeth Divine authority upon books esteemed by the Councils and Fathers to be Apocryphal ?§ Whilst it hath forged decrees of Popes,|| and (like a deceitful Gibeonite) rendered that which was really new, in appearance, old and mouldy, on purpose to promote the imposture ? How doth it give us the sense of the ancients, when it owneth what it formerly disowned as canonical, the Epistle to the Hebrews ?¶ When it taketh away the cup which Pope Gelasius called a great sacrilege ?** When it now rejecteth the communicating of infants, which in former times was esteemed by many a very necessary point ? When a former Pope Gregory condemns the title of Universal Pastor as anti-Christian, and a latter insists upon it as the choicest flower in the Papal prerogative ? When St. Austin,†† and from him the very Breviary,††† shall expound Christ’s promise, of being always with his Church, of the presence of his Divinity, and of his spirit and not of his body ; and Pope Innocent III. shall interpret it as meant also of his corporal presence ?§§

And if the Roman Church falsifyeth written tradition, how shall we trust her for oral ? And how and at what time did that oral tradition remove from Greece to Rome, where the Greek Church, which it alloweth to have been once possessed

* Lib. diurn. Pontif. p. 35. etenim hujus Apostolicae Traditionis normam quam venerandam Sanctorum 318. Patrum Concilium quod in Nicea, &c. et p. 43. hujusmodi Evangelicam Traditionem.

† Histor. Monoth. p. 123. [Par. 1678.]

‡ Conc. Trid. Sess. 4. deecr. 1. [Labbe, Conc. vol. 14. p. 746. Lut. Par. 1672.]

§ V. constit. Apost. can. Apost. [Ibid. vol. 1. p. 44, 46.] conc. Laod. conc. [Ibid. p. 507.] Nic. [Ibid. vol. 2. p. 1256.] 1. S. Hieron. Prolog. &c. Euseb. E. H. 1. 4. c. 26. p. 149. [Par. 1659.] Chron. 1. 2, &c.

|| V. Blondelli Pseudo-Isidorum.

¶ V. S. Hieron. in Isai. c. 6. 8. [c. 6. 2.] [vol. 4. p. 91. Veron. 1734.]

** Gratian. in de Consecr. dist. 2. cap. 2. [cap. 12.] [Corp. Jur. Can. vol. 1. p. 1918. Lugg. 1671.]

†† S. Aug. tract. 30. in Joh. et tract. 50. [vol. 3. par. 2. p. 517, 631. Par. 1680.]

†† Brev. Rom. Dom. infra oct. Asc. 3. noct. lect. 7. p. 440. [Antv. 1697.]

§§ Innoc. 3. Myst. miss. 1. 4. p. 196. [c. 36. p. 392. Colon. 1675.]

of the true tradition, is accused of heresy? This principle of oral tradition is most uncertain to their judges; and to those to whom they offer it, it is most obscure. It is a principle on which they can serve a purpose, in justifying novel doctrines as oral traditions not known to any but the Roman Church, which pretendeth to the custody of them.

5. This guide is not what they call the Roman Catholic Church, or the Roman with the collection of particular Churches in communion with her, declaring her present doctrine by the uniform voice of her pastors and people.* For in some ages there is no such uniform declaration. In our age one part of that Church contradicts what another declares in a very material point, and the Pope forbears a formal decision. For example sake, the body of the French clergy sets forth four propositions which detract from the infallibility of the Pope. Soon after this is done, Georgius Szelepechemy, archbishop of Gran, and primate of Hungary, does publicly condemn them as destructive to the souls of Christian men.† Here the laity, though in the same Roman Church, have in divers countries contrary guides.

CHAP. V.

The remainder of the fourth Consideration concerning a sixth pretended guide, the Bishop of Rome. Also the fifth Consideration concerning the little necessity there is for such guidance.

6. God hath not set up any one person in the catholic Church in the quality of an unerring guide in the Christian faith. The bishops of Rome who pretend to this prerogative, do but pretend: it is a tender point; and the Pope's legates, in the Council of Trent,‡ were enjoined to give forth this advertisement, that the fathers, upon no account whatsoever, should touch it or dispute about it. They who examine it, will soon reject it as false and useless.

* See Vind. of B. of Meaux, p. 100.

† V. Censur. Hungar. p. 6, 7, 8. Inter caetera autem quae se nobis corrigenda et eliminanda obtulerunt et moram pati non possunt sine evidenti periculo Animarum, non ultimum locum tenent quatuor illæ Propositiones quae Cleri Gall. &c.

‡ H. Conc. Trid. l. 2.

Arg. I. And, 1. Whether the Pope be or be not the guide, the men of the Roman communion are exposed to dangerous uncertainty. For, it is not yet determined amongst them, whether they are to follow the Pope, with, or without, or against, a Council. Yet a Pope hath owned a Council which deposed other Popes, and by decree set itself above them, or rather vindicated the superiority due to it. Thus Martin V. received the Papal mitre from the Council of Constance, after it had deposed Gregory XII., Benedict XIII., and John XXIII. Again, there have been, by the account given us in their own historians,* more than twenty formed schisms in that Church; two or more Popes pretending at the same time to the infallible chair, and each of them not being without their followers, and giving holy orders. And at this time there is risen an apologist† for Mauritius Burdin, or Gregory VIII., though he was ejected by the Roman Church, which received Gelasius into his place; Burdin being disliked by them as a creature of Henry the Emperor. This schism (saith St. Bernard)‡ distracted that Church, and gave it a wound only not incurable. And Baluzius§ professeth that it was then difficult to understand which of the two, Gregory or Gelasius, was the legitimate successor of Pope Paschal. Now, how useless to them is the pretence of a guide, when they want some other guide who should tell them which of the pretenders they may securely follow?

Arg. II. Secondly, The Popes themselves in their solemn profession, suppose themselves liable to the misleading of the people even in matters of faith. For having owned the faith of the six General Councils,|| “They further profess themselves and others to be subject to an anathema, if they advance novelty contrary to the aforesaid evangelical tradition, and the integrity of the orthodox and Christian faith.”

Arg. III. Thirdly, If the Pope challengeth this power of infallible guidance, he must lay claim to it by his succeeding of St. Peter in that chair apostolical. But by equal reason, the successors of each Apostle may challenge the office of an

* See the Index Onuphrii, vit. Pontif. ed. Colon. 1610.

† Steph. Baluz. in miscellan. l. 3. p. 471 to 514. [Par. 1680.]

‡ S. Bern. Ep. 219. [vol. 1. p. 202. Par. 1690.]

§ Baluz. ibid. p. 514. difficile tunc erat, &c.

|| Lib. diurn. Pontif. 2. professio fidei, p. 43. — Unde et districti Anathematis interdictio subjicimus, si quis unquam, seu nos, sive est alius, qui novum aliquid presumat contra hujusmodi Evangelicam Traditionem, et Orthodoxæ fidei, Christianæque Religionis integritatem, &c.

infallible guide. For the power which Christ gave to St. Peter, he gave to the rest: it was not special. They did not understand that Christ intended by his promise* to give greater power to St. Peter than to the rest; for there arose a controversy among them after this, who should be chief, and Christ declared against such supremacy. When they were together, as in an Apostolical College, before or on the day of Pentecost, there was need of a president for order sake; and St. Peter might then be the first of them. He was not so after they were dispersed in order to the propagation of the Christian faith, and the planting of churches; he was not so at Jerusalem, where St. James being the bishop, had the precedence; and in Rome itself, St. Paul's province at the beginning seems to have been greater than St. Peter's; it being the province of the Gentiles, whilst St. Peter's was that of the Jews. Accordingly St. Paul's charge was more in the city, St. Peter's in the suburbs, the Vatican being then (as Mr. Thorndike calls it)† the Jewry of Rome. And for the bishops of Antioch, who first succeeded St. Peter, they have much fairer pretence than those of Rome. The truth is, Jerusalem was properly the Mother-Church; though Rome was the Imperial City; and if by this means the Popes had not sat higher, they would not have pretended to see further than others.

Arg. IV. Fourthly, Those who have considered the writings of many Popes, and the decrees made by them, have found no reason to lay their faith at their golden sandal. It is manifest to every learned man, that the eyes of the Pope are not (metaphorically) like those of Augustus, in which (it is said) there appeared a brightness like that of the sun. If we had more of their history, and more of their writings, we should find more of their errors. They have shewed both ignorance and extravagance in opinion, and error in the faith itself. There are not, perhaps, weaker or more absurd passages in any ecclesiastical writer, than we may find in the works of Pope Innocent III. who was called the Wonder of the World.‡ He saith of subdeacons, that they represented the Nethinims§ (or Nathinnims, as he calls them); and that Nathaniel was one of that order:|| that the Pope does not use

* Matth. xviii. 1. xx. 24, 26. Luke xxii. 24, 25.

† Thornd. Epil. 3 part. p. 164, 165.

‡ Mat. Par. A. 1217. stupor mundi.

§ Ezra viii. 20.

|| Innoc. 3. Myst. missæ, l. 1. c. 2. [c. 4.] fol. 158. [ut supra, p. 319.]

a pastoral rod, because St. Peter sent his staff to Eucharius the first bishop of Treves, to whom Maternus succeeded, who, by the same staff, was raised from the dead:^{*} that the people have seven salutations in the mass, in order to the expelling the seven deadly sins, and receiving the sevenfold grace of God:[†] that an epistle, signifying in Greek, an over-sending or supererogation, the word agrees very well to the Apostolical Epistles, which are superadded to the Gospel.[‡] He allots to each article of the Apostolical and Constantimopolitan Creeds, a particular Apostle, and finds the mystery in all things that are twelve in number. For example sake, in the twelve loaves of shew-bread; in the twelves tribes; twelve hours; twelve months.

He gives this reason why water is by the bishop mixed with wine in the holy chalice; because it is said in the Revelation, that "many waters signify many people," and that "Christ shed his blood for the people."[§] He saith that Judas was not at the sacrament^{||} because he was not to drink it new with Christ in his kingdom, which privilege he had promised to all the partakers. He teacheth that mice eat only the shows of consecrated bread.[¶] He professeth rather to venerate sacraments than to pry into them,^{**} because it is written Exodus the twelfth, concerning the paschal lamb, "eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire." I have not narrowly ransacked the plaits of the Pope's vestments for this refuse matter; it is obvious enough, and so were a great many other sayings of equal weakness; but I am weary of them. There have been other Popes also extremely credulous and injudicious. Eugenius III. approved of the prophecies or enthusiastic dreams of Hildegardis, in the Synod of Triers, as inspirations. Popy Zachary judged the true doctrine of Antipodes, to be heretical in the case of the more learned and knowing Virgilius.^{††} Herein the Pope committed

* Innoc. 3. ibid. c. 62. fol. 165. [Ibid. p. 333.]

† Ibid. l. 2. c. 24. fol. 170. [Ibid. p. 344.]

‡ Ibid. c. 29. fol. 171. [Ibid. p. 347.]

§ Ibid. c. 58. fol. 177. [Ibid. p. 358.]

|| Ibid. l. 4. c. 13. fol. 189. [Ibid. p. 381.]

¶ Ibid. c. 10. [c. 11.] fol. 190. [Ibid. p. 380.]

** Ibid. c. 19. [Ibid. p. 385.]

†† Epist. Zach. p. ad Bonifac. inter op. M. Velseri, in l. 5. Rer. Boic. p. 148. [p. 285. August. Vind. 1602.] de perversa autem [Virgilii] Doctrina, quam contra dominum et animam suam locutus est, quod scil. alias mundus et alii homines sub terra sint, aliasque Sol et Luna, si convictus fuerit ita confiteri, hunc accito Concilio ab Ecclesia pelle Sacerdotii honore privatum.

a greater error than the poor priest who baptized in *nomine Patria et filia et Spiritus Sancta* ;* and whose lack of Latin, Boniface the German Apostle, would have punished by the re-baptization of his proselytes, if the said Virgilius had not, by application to that Pope, prevented it. It is true, Virgilius was accused as a heretic who had set up another sun and another moon, as well as another world of men whose feet were opposite to ours. But Velserus† himself hath the ingenuity to confess, that this was meant only of the sun and moon as shining to our Antipodes, as well as to us: and that the accusation was framed by ignorant men, who had not the acuteness to understand the globular form of the earth, and the scheme of the proposer. Neither had Pope Zachary himself sagacity enough to discern the nature of this ridiculous charge. He who can mistake truth for heresy, may mistake heresy for truth.

Now that Popes have erred not only in lesser things, but even in matters of faith, is plain from history. I will instance only in Vigilius and Honorius, forbearing to speak of Liberius and divers others who swerved from the truly ancient catholic faith.

Pope Vigilius framed a constitution in favour of the three chapters or Nestorian writings of Ibas bishop of Edessa, Theodorus of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret bishop of Cyrus. This constitution was published by Cardinal Baronius,‡ out of an ancient manuscript in the Vatican library: and he calls it a decree§ in defence of these chapters. In this decree the Pope doth not only justify these heretical writings, but, with the followers of Theodorus, he falsely chargeth upon the Council of Chalcedon, the epistle of Ibas,|| and calls it orthodox. This charge the Fathers of the fifth General Council¶ shew to be unjust and false. That Council condemneth those three chapters as heretical: and, together with them, it condemneth** Pope Vigilius and others, under the name of Sequaces or followers of Nestorius and Theodorus. Baronius himself acknowledgeth, that the decree of that Council was set up against the decree of that Pope.†† These chapters had not

* Velser. op. Ibid. p. 147. [Ibid. p. 283.]

† Velser. Ibid. p. 149. [Ibid. p. 286.]

‡ Baron. Annal. A. 553. N. 48. ed. Colon. p. 486.

§ Id. Ibid. N. 218. p. 419. || Id. An. 553. N. 192. p. 511.

¶ Conc. Constant. 2. Collat. 6. [Labbe, Conc. vol. 5. p. 549, &c. Lut. Par. 1671.] ** Defin. Conc. col. 8. [Ibid. p. 563, &c.]

†† Baron. Annal. 553. N. 212. p. 417. —— Actumque est (ut apparerit) aduersus Vigilius constitutum, licet præ reverentia ipsum non nominaverint.

been condemned, if they had not contained in them the Nestorian heresy. The Epistle of Ibās does, in particular manner, extol Theodorus: and the Council affirmeth concerning his creed, "that the father of lies composed it;" and it denounceth a curse against both the composer and the believers of it. Yet doubtless these writings were in themselves inconsiderable enough. But the Council opposed them with such vigour, because the faction had made them very popular, and advanced them into the quality of a kind of Bible of the party. For Pope Honorius, he fell into the heresy of the Monothelites;* that is, of those who held that there is but one will in both the natures of Christ. This doctrine he published in his epistles. This was declared in the sixth General Council,† in his letters sent to Sergius of Constantinople, which the Fathers, with unanimous consent, condemned to the fire. He is anathematized by the seventh Synod;‡ as also by Pope Adrian II. in the eighth:§ and he was at first expressly anathematized for confirming the wicked doctrine of Sergius.

The guilt of heresy in Honorius is acknowledged in one edition at least || of the Roman Breviary, where it is spoken in the praise of Leo II. that he received that holy Synod, — in which Honorius, Pyrrhus, Sergius, were condemned; and owned in the solemn profession of faith made by the Popes at their entrance on the Papacy,¶ as is manifest from the words in the *Liber Diurnus*. The case is plain, but Garnerius and Marchesius have done their good wills to darken and perplex

* Hist. Mon. scrut. 5. p. 192, 193. [Par. 1678.] Altera phrasis Honoriiana longe difficilior, minime tamen dissimulanda, est ea, quod dicat aperte. Unde et unam voluntatem fatemur domini nostri Iesu Christi.

† Syn. 6. act. 12, 13. [Labbe, Conc. ut supra, p. 917, &c. 944, &c.] See Richer. Hist. Conc. General. vol. 1. p. 569, &c. [Colon. 1681.]

‡ Syn. 7. Act. ult. [vol. 7.] p. 886. Con. in Labb. Richer. H. Conc. Gen. vol. 1. p. 658. Ad calc. ejusd. Act. 7. [Ibid. p. 898.] in omn. editionibus Concil. legitur Epist. Synod. quam Tarasius, &c. — Et diserte narrat cunctos Patres — Honorium damnasse.

§ Syn. oct. Alloc. 3. [Ibid. vol. 8. p. 1091.]

|| Breviar. Rom. Anni 1553. 3. Lect. in pervigil. SS. Pet. et Pauli. V. not. in Cens. Hung. p. 13, 14.

¶ Lib. diurn. Pontif. Conf. fid. 2. p. 41. Autores vero novi haeretici dogmatis, Sergium, Pyrrhum, Paulum, et Petrum Episcopos, una cum Honorio (qui pravis eorum assertionibus fomentum impedit) pariterque et Theodorum Pharamitanum, et Cyrum Alexandrinum, cum eorum imitatoribus, &c.

it. Garnerius the Jesuit maintains the antiquity* of the *Liber Diurnus*, and the integrity of the acts of the sixth Synod ; but he will not grant that Honorius was a Monothelite. Marchesius the Oratorian will not allow of the *Liber Diurnus*, though it was collected betwixt the years 563 and 752, and the character of the MSS. shewed the book to be of venerable age : he rejects the acts of the sixth Synod as corrupted : he suspects that some impostor had a hand in the acts of the seventh :† he absolves Honorius from all manner of heresy : he took the first step false, when he believed that a Pope was infallible, and that caused him to err in all that followed ; but this matter is so manifest, that Melchior Canus‡ professeth, no sophistry is artful enough to put the colour of a plausible defence upon it. A late Romanist hath undertaken to write the history of the Monothelites ;§ and the defence of Honorius seemeth to be the principal motive to that undertaking. Yet so great is the power of truth, and such, in this case, is the plainness of it, that in the apologist himself, we find these concessions : that the Pope || was condemned by the Council, and that the Council was not to be blamed ;¶ that Pope Leo II. owned both the Council and the sentence, and that Honorius was sentenced as an heretic.** He would abate this guilt by saying†† that Honorius erred as a private person, and not as head of the Church, because his epistle was hortatory, and not compulsive. It is true, he erred not as head of the Church, for such he was not, neither as such was he owned. But he erred as a public person, and with heretical obstinacy : for Pope Leo, as he noteth, said concerning him, that he "had made it his business to betray and subvert the holy faith."††

Now this matter of fact sufficeth for the refuting all the fallacious reasonings of the patrons of papal infallibility. For all must agree that they are not unerring guides who actually err. The Sieur de Balzac§§ mocks at the weakness of one of the Romish fathers, who offered four reasons to prove that the Duke D'Espernon was not returned out of England : and offered them to a gentleman who had seen him since his return.

* Pref. ad 1. Diurn. p. 3. Append. p. 174, 175, &c. 180, 187.

† Vind. P. Honor. p. 276, &c. p. 65, &c. p. 360, 400, 401. p. 317.

‡ Melch. Can. Loci com. L. 6. c. ult. p. 242, 243, &c.

§ Hist. Mon. Par. 1678. || Idem ibid. p. 224, 225, 226.

¶ P. 218. ** Idem, p. 220. †† P. 207, 208.

†† Idem, p. 122. Profana proditione immaculatam fidem subvertere conatus est — Flammam confovit, p. 123. §§ Socr. Christ. p. 40.

In order to the evading the force of these reasonings, some of late have gone about to new mould the controversy. They will not deny that Pope Agatho consented to the condemnation of Honorius, that he was rightly condemned, that Popes are liable to heresy.* They place the infallibility of Church-guidance in a General Council, joined with, and confirmed by the Bishop of the See Apostolic.

To this state of the question, many things may be said.

1. This is contrary to the belief of the Jesuits, who are a great part of the present governing Roman Church, and who in their late theses in the College of Clermont maintained this assertion,† “that, in the Church of Rome, there was a judge of controversies in faith, even without a General Council, both in questions of right and fact.”

2. The Roman See, is not the only See Apostolic, neither did the Pope either summon, or strictly speaking confirm the General Councils most truly so called.

3. Bellarmine himself teacheth,‡ “that one cause of the calling of a General Council is a suspicion of heresy in the Pope.” Now, is it probable that such a Pope should either call one, or having called it, confirm it against himself? And it seems, if he does not, it is not authentic. It is true, a new Pope may be induced to call a Council, and to condemn a former one; but whilst the former heretical pastor lives, what a guide have the sheep?

4. In new controversies, before a General Council be called and confirmed by their See Apostolic, where is the infallible guide? The precept of having a Pope has been held to be affirmative, and not negative,§ and believed not to bind always. For the Church subsists after the death of such a pretended head, and during the vacancy of any See, and after the death of Marcellinus the See was vacant seven years. And whilst Popes live, they either will not, or cannot procure General Councils for many years; and what shall the unsatisfied do, during these intervals? We are told, that “in new controversies arising,|| and not formerly determined by such

* See R. H. of Church Authority, p. 150.

† Dec. 12. A. 1661. Datur in Eccl. Rom. Controv. fidei Judex etiam extra Concil. Gen. tum in Quaest. juris, tum facti.

‡ Bellar. de Concil. l. 1. c. 9. [vol. 2. p. 7. Prag. 1721.]

§ V. Richer. de Eccl. et Polit. Pot. c. 3. p. 38.

|| R. H. of Church Authority, p. 150.

Councils, Church-guides may justly impose silence, till such controversies shall be decided."

But, is this imposition not as practicable in the English as in the Roman Church? And all this while, where is the infallibility? And who is it that unerringly guides their inward faith, whilst present authority governs their manners?

After all this, these very men, who rely so much upon Councils, rely finally upon the judgment of the Pope. For from him they take the sense of the Council of Trent, which entrusted the Pope with the main of the affair. From Popes, after the breaking up of the Council, they receive the correction of the copy of the Bible in the vulgar Latin; the *Catechismus ad Parochos*, the correct Breviary, the Creed which contained their additional articles. Sixtus Quintus, Clemens Octavus, Pius Quartus, are their infallible guides.

Consid. V. There seemeth no fitness in the constitution of such a guide; nor any necessity for it.

Had it been agreeable to God's wisdom, his wisdom would not have been wanting to itself. God having made man a reasonable creature, would not make void the use of deliberation, and the freedom of his judgment. There is no virtue in the assent, where the eye is forced open, and the light held directly to it. It is enough that God, the rewarder of them who believe, hath given men sufficient faculties, and sufficient means.

And, seeing holiness is as necessary to the pleasing of God, and to the peace of the world, as union in doctrine (to which there is too frequently given a lifeless assent); seeing there must be Christian obedience as long as there is a Church; seeing (as the Guide in Controversy * himself urgeth) the catholic Church and all the parts of it are believed, in the Creed, to be holy as well as orthodox: we ask not the Romanists an impertinent question, when we desire them to tell us, why a means to infallibility in the judgment, rather than irresistibleness in the pious choice of the will, is to be by heaven provided in the Church? Both seem a kind of destination of equal necessity.

And this seems to have been the sense of Jacobus Almain,† who wrote about the time of the appearing of Luther; for after having proved, as he conceived, that the Pope might err

* R. H. Annot. on D. St. Ans. p. 81.

† Jac. Alm. lib. de Auctor. Eccles. cap. 10. p. 65. Mirum est quod Advers. non asserunt eum impeccabilem, &c.

judicially as well as personally, and in a matter of faith as well as in other matters; he concludes to this purpose, "it is a wonder that the adversaries do not assert that the Pope is impeccable: and I believe they would do so, if the daily actions of Popes did not compel them to believe the contrary."

CHAP. VI.

The fifth Proposition relating to the Ecclesiastical Guidance used by the Reformed.

Prop. V. But though the Reformed, especially those of the Church of England, see no necessity for an infallible guide, nor believe there is one on the face of the earth, yet they do not reject all ecclesiastical guidance, but allow it great place in matters of discipline and order, and some place also (though not that of an unerring judge) in matters of faith.

At the beginning of the Reformation, the Protestants, though they refused the judgment of the Pope their enemy, yet they declined not the determination of a Council. And, in the assembly at Augsburg, the Romanists and Protestants agreed in a Council as the umpire of their public difference. At this the Pope was so alarmed (saith the Sieur de Mezeray)* that he wrote to the Kings of France and England, "that he would do all they would desire, provided they hindered the calling of a Council."

In the reformation of the Church of England, great regard was had to the primitive Fathers and Councils. And the aforesaid French historian was as much mistaken in the affairs of our Church, when he said of our religion, that it was a medley of the opinions of Calvin and Luther,† as he was afterwards in the affairs of our state, when he said King James was elected at the Guildhall King of England.‡

The Romanists represent us very falsely, whilst they fix upon us a private spirit, as it stands in opposition to the authority of the Catholic Church.

Mr. Alabaster§ expresseth one motive to his conversion to the Roman Church, in these words: "Weigh together the

* Hist. Fran. A. 1530.

† Mez. Hist. A. 1548.

‡ Id. ib. A. 1603.

§ See J. Racster's 7 Motives of W. A. p. 11, 12.

spouse of Christ, with Luther, Calvin, Melanthon : Ecumenical Councils, with private opinions; the reverend and learned Fathers, with Arius, Aetius, Vigilantius, men always in their time burned for heretics" [of which words, the former are false reasoning, the latter are false history.] The Bishop of Meaux* reasons after the same fallacious manner : "Supposing a Protestant to be of this persuasion, that he can understand the Scriptures better than all the rest of the Church together;" of which persuasion he saith very truly, that it exalteth pride and removeth docility.

The Guide in Controversies† puts the question wrong in these terms : "Whether a Protestant, in refusing the submission of his judgment to the authority or infallibility of the catholic Church in her Councils, can have in several articles of necessary faith, wherein the sense of Scripture is controverted, as sure a foundation of his faith, as he who submits his judgment to the aforesaid authority, or also infallibility?" Here the catholic Church is put in place of the Roman, authority and infallibility are joined together, and it is suggested dishonestly concerning the Reformed, that they lay aside the authority of the catholic Church in her General Councils. Authority may be owned where there is no infallibility ; for it is not in parents natural or civil : yet both teach and govern us.

If others reject Church authority, let them who are guilty of such disorderly irreverence see to it. The Christians of the Church of England are of another spirit. Of that Church this is one of the Articles :‡ "The Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." "There is a question (saith Mr. Selden)§ about that article, concerning the power of the Church, whether these words [of having power in controversies of faith] were not stolen in. But it is most certain they were in the Book of Articles that was confirmed, though in some editions they have been left out." They were so in Dr. Mocket's ;|| but he is to be considered in that edition as a private man. Now this article does not make the Church an infallible guide in the articles of faith, but a moderator in the controversies about faith. The Church doth not assume that authority to itself

* Confer. avec M. Claude, p. 110.

† R. H. Annot. on D. St. Answ. p. 84. ‡ Art. 20.

§ Mr. Selden in his Colloquies ; MS. in the word Church, sect. 5.

|| Doct. et Polit. Eccl. Ang. A. 1617, p. 129.

in this article, which, in the foregoing,* it denied to the Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch and Rome. When perverse men will raise such controversies, who is so fit, for peace sake, to interpose, as that Church where the flame is kindled? There can be no Church without a creed; and each particular Church ought to believe her creed to be true, and, by consequence, must exercise her authority in the defence of presumed truth. Otherwise she is not true to her own constitution. But still she acts under the caution given by St. Augustine,† “ You bind a man on earth: take heed they be just bonds in which you retain him. For justice will break such as are unjust in sunder.” And whilst the Church of England challengeth this authority, she doth not pretend to it from any supernatural gift of infallibility, but so far only as she believes she hath sincerely followed an infallible rule. For of this importance are the next words of the Article before-remembered. “ —— It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s word written.” “ —— And besides the same, it ought not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.”‡

After this manner the Church of England asserteth her own authority, and she runs not into any extreme about the authority of Councils, or the Catholic Church.

We make confession of the ancient faith expressed in the Apostolical, Nicene or Constantinopolitan, and Athanasian Creeds. The Canons of Forty reject the heresy of Socinus, as contrary to the first four General Councils.§ Our very Statute-book hath respect to them in the adjudging of heresy.|| Yet our Church still teacheth concerning them,¶ that “ things by them ordained have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.”

When controversies arise, especially when the doubts concern not so much the article of faith itself, as the modes of it, we grant to such venerable assemblies a potiority of judgment; or if we assent not, yet for peace sake we are humbly silent: we do not altogether refuse their umpirage. We think their definitions good arguments against unquiet men, who are chiefly moved by authority. We believe them very useful in the controversies

* Art. 19.

† S. Aug. de verb. Dom. super Mat. Ser. 16. [vol. 5. p. 442. Par. 1683.]

‡ Art. 20.

§ Can. 5.

|| 1 Eliz. 1. sect. 36.

¶ Art. 21.

betwixt us and the Church of Rome ; and as often as they appeal to primitive Fathers and Councils, to Fathers and Councils we are willing to go with them, and to be tried by those who are nigher to the Apostles, in the quality of witnesses rather than judges. We believe that in matters of truth, of which we are already persuaded, there may be added by the suffrages of Councils and Fathers, a degree of corroboration to our assent. In sum, we say with St. Austin,* that there is of Councils in the Church of God a most wholesome [though not an infallible] authority. And if St. Gregory Nazianzen never saw, as he saith, “ a happy effect of any Synod,”† this came not to pass from the nature of the means, as not conducive to that end, but from the looseness of government, and the depraved manners of the age in which he lived : for such were the times of Valens the emperor.

It is true, there are some among us, though not of us, who with disdainful insolence, condemn all authority, even that of the sacred Scripture itself. These pretend to an infallible light of immediate and personal revelation. It hath happened according to the proverb, “ Every man of them hath a Pope within him.” Henry Nicholas puffed up many vain ignorant people with this proud imagination. Hetherington, a mechanic, about the end of the reign of King James, advanced this notion of personal infallibility. His followers believed they could not err in giving deliberate sentence in religion.‡ And this was the principle of Wynstanly and the first Quakers, though the leaders, since they were embodied, have in part forsaken it.

But these enthusiasts have entitled the Holy Spirit of God to their own dreams. They have pretended to revelations which are contrary to one another. They can be guides to themselves only, because they cannot by any supernatural sign prove to others that they are inspired.

And such enthusiasm is not otherwise favoured in the Church of England than by Christian piety, in consideration of the infirmity of human nature ; but in the Church of Rome it hath been favoured to that degree, that it hath (they say) founded many orders and religious houses, and given

* Ep. 118. Concil. in Eccl. Dei saluberrimam esse autoritatem. [vol. 2. p. 124. Par. 1679.]

† Greg. Naz. Ep. 42. ad Procopium. [vol. 1. p. 814. Par. 1630.]

‡ See D. Dennison’s white Wolf.

reputation to some doctrines, and canonized not a few saints amongst them. The inspiration of St. Hildegardis, St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Teresa, and many others, seemeth to many to have been vapour making impression on a devout fancy: yet the Church of Rome in a Council under Leo X. hath too much encouraged such distemper as prophesy.*

For private reason, it is the handmaid of faith; we use it, and not separately from the authority of the Church, but as a help in distinguishing true from false authority. And in so plain a case as heresy, if our Church thinketh a private man may, without an infallible guide on earth, judge aright of it, it does but believe as Pope Adrian II. believed:† for speaking of the sentence against Pope Honorius, he excuseth it in point of good behaviour, because it was given in the case of heresy. For in that case, and in that case alone, he allowed inferiors (so he was pleased to call the Oriental Bishops) to reject the corrupt sense of those who are superior to them.

I will hasten to the next proposition, after I have added one thing more which relates to the guidance of ecclesiastical authority: and it is this. Those of the unlearned laity, who are members of the Church of England, have much more of the just guidance of ecclesiastical authority, than the like order of men in the Church of Rome. For the authentic books of that Church being all written in the Latin tongue, the illiterate people resolve their faith into the ability and honesty of their confessor or parish-priest. They take it upon his word, that this is the doctrine, this the discipline, this the worship of their Church. Whereas each minister in our Church can direct the people to the Holy Bible, to the Books of Homilies, Articles, Canons, Common-Prayer, Ordination, as set forth in their native tongue by public authority. Of this they may be assured by their own eyes, as many as can but competently read. They do not only take this from the mouth of a priest, but from the Church itself. Where the laws of the Church,

* Conc. Lat. sess. 11. A. 1516. inter Labb. Conc. Max. p. 291. Ceterum si quibusdam eorum Dominus futura quedam in Dei Ecclesie inspiratione quapiam revelaverit, ut per Amos prophetam ipse promittit, et Paulus Ap. praedicatorum princeps, Spiritum, inquit, nolite extinguere, prophetas nolite spernere, hos aliorum fabulosorum et mendacium gregi connumerari vel aliter impediri minime volumus.

† Syn. 8. Alloc. 3. Licit enim Honorio post mortem Anathema sit dictum ab Orientalibus, sciendum tamen est qui fuerat super heresi accusatus, propter quam solam licitum est minoribus majorum suorum moribus resistendi, vel pravos sensus libere resuendi, &c. [Ut supra, vol. 8. p. 1091.]

and the statutes of the civil government are written in an unknown tongue, there the unlearned depend more upon private than upon public authority ; for they receive the law from particular priests or judges.

CHAP. VII.

Proposition the sixth, concerning the Rule of Faith, the Holy Scripture, considered under three Assertions.

Prop. VI. THOUGH ecclesiastical authority be a help to our faith, yet the Holy Scripture is the only infallible Rule of it ; and by this rule, and the ministerial aids of the Christian Church, we have sufficient means, without submission to Papal infallibility, to attain to certainty in that faith which is generally necessary to salvation.

I do not mean, that by believing the whole Canon of the Scripture in gross, we thereby believe all the necessary articles of the faith, because they are therein contained. That looks too like a fallacy ; and it giveth countenance to a useless faith. For he that believes on this manner, hath as it were swallowed a Creed in the lump only, whereas it is necessary for a Christian to know each particular article, and the general nature and tendency of it. Otherwise his faith will not have a distinct influence upon his Christian behaviour, to which if it were not useful, it were not necessary. To believe in general as the Scripture believes, is with the blind and flexible faith of a Romanist, to believe at adventure. He believes as his Church believes, but he knows not what is the belief of his Church ; and therefore is not instructed by that faith to behave himself as a member of it.

The Scripture is that rule of faith, which giveth us all the particular articles which are necessary to eternal life.

By this rule the primitive Fathers governed themselves, and this they commended to the Churches ; and Clemens Alexandrinus* does in terms call the consent of the Old and New Testament the “ecclesiastical canon, and the touchstone of true

* Cl. Alex. Strom. 2. κανών ἐκκλησιαστικός ή συνφίλια, &c. et Strom. 7.—ἀληθῶν καὶ ψευδῶν κριτήριον. [p. 890. Venet. 1757.]

and false." I will not multiply testimonies; enough of them are already collected.*

I will rather pursue the argument before me, in these three assertions.

First, *A Protestant, without the submission of his judgment to the Roman Church, may be certainly directed to the Canonical Books of Holy Scripture.*

Secondly, *He may without such submission, sufficiently understand the Rule of Faith, and find out the sense of such places in those Canonical Books, as is necessary to the belief of a true Christian.*

Thirdly, *This Rule of Faith is the principal means of union in faith in the Christian Church.*

Assert. I. First, *A Protestant, without the submission of his judgment to the Roman Church, may be certainly directed to the Holy Scriptures.*

It is commonly said by men of the Roman persuasion, but injudiciously enough, that we may as well receive our Creed from them as we do our Bible. The Scribes and Pharisees might have said the like to the people of the Jews. But with the good text, they conveyed down to them a very false gloss, and misinterpreted the prophecies, as meant of a pompous temporal Messiah. But, for the Reformed, they have received neither Creed nor Bible from the Church of Rome. The first enumeration of those Books they find in the Apostolical Canons, and in those of the Council of Laodicea; no western writings. They have received the Scriptures from the Universal Church of all ages and places, the copies of them having been as widely dispersed as the Christians themselves. And they receive them not from the infallibility of any particular Church, but upon the validity of this sure principle, that all the Christian world, so widely dispersed, could not possibly conspire in the imposing of false books upon them.

For particular Churches, we may of all others suspect the Roman, in reference to the Scriptures. For what sincerity of dealing may we hope for from such a cabal of men as has forged decrees of Councils and Popes, obtruded upon the world Apocryphal Books as Books Canonical, purged out of the writings of the Fathers some of the places which were con-

* V. Davenant. de Judice et norma fidei, c. 12. p. 53, &c. D. Till. Rule of Faith, part 4. sect. 2. p. 320, &c.

trary to their innovations, depressed the originals under an imperfect Latin copy, and left on purpose in that copy some places uncorrected for the serving of turns. For example sake, they have not either in the Bible of Sixtus, or in that of Clement (both which, though in war against each other, are made their canon) changed the word [*she*] in the third of Genesis,* for [*that, or he.*] But, contrary to the Hebrew text, to the translation of the Seventy, to the readings of the Fathers, they persist in rendering of it after this manner, “she shall break thy head.” They believe this reading tendeth most to the honour of the blessed Virgin, whom they are too much inclined to exalt, in the quality of a mother above her son. The English translation of Douay hath followed this plain and partial corruption.

Assert. II. Secondly, *A Protestant may, without submission of his judgment to the Roman Church, find out, in the Books of Holy Scripture, the necessary articles of Christian faith.*

Two things are here supposed; and both of them are true.

First, That the Scriptures contain in them all the necessary articles of our faith.

Secondly, That the sense of the words in which these articles are expressed in Scripture, may be found out by a Protestant, without the submission of his judgment to the Papacy.

First, The Scriptures contain in them all the necessary articles of the faith. This is true, if the Scriptures themselves be so: for this they witness.† St. Paul‡ saith of the Old Testament, as expounded of Christ, that it was able to make a man “wise unto salvation.” Much more may this be affirmed of the entire canon. The Apostles preached the necessaries to salvation, and what they had preached they wrote down;§ concerning the manner of it, Eusebius may be consulted.|| For the primitive Fathers, they allowed the Scriptures to be a sufficient rule. Irenaeus said of them, “they were perfect;”¶ and of the words of St. Austin, this is the sense; “among those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, all those

* Gen. iii. 15.

† John xx. 30, 31. chap. xxi. 25.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17.

§ Iren. I. 3. c. 1. [vol. 1. p. 173. col. 2. Venet. 1734.]

|| Eus. Hist. Eccl. I. 2. c. 14. [p. 52. Par. 1659.]

¶ Iren. I. 2. c. 47. [c. 28. ut supra, p. 156. col. 1.] S. Aug. de doct. Christ. I. 2. c. 9. [vol. 3. p. 31. Bassan. 1797.]

things are to be found which comprehend faith and good manners." Nay, the Romanists themselves attempt to prove their very additional articles out of the Bible. That there are in it the articles of the Apostolical Creed, is evident enough to a common reader. But how the Romish articles should be found in that Bible which was written some hundreds of years before they were invented, is a riddle beyond the skill of Apollo.

Secondly, The sense of the Scriptures, in matters necessary to salvation, may be found out by men of the Reformed religion, without submission to Roman infallibility. The learned know the originals, and the true ways of interpretation. And amongst us, those of the episcopal clergy have obliged the world with such an edition of the Bible in many languages, as was not before extant in the Roman Church. And a Romanist who writes with great mastery in such matters, prefers it before the great Bible of Paris.*

For those of the laity who are unlearned, they have before them a translation which errs not in the faith. And the phrases are not so obscure, but that, by study and ministerial helps, they may understand them.

They have before them, a translation which errs not in the faith. Of this the Italians and French may be convinced, by comparing the translation of James de Voragine, and the divines of Lovain, with those of Signor Diodati, and Olivetan or Calvin. And the English may receive satisfaction in this matter, by comparing their translation with that of Douay. In all of them they will find the same fundamental doctrines of faith. And were there any such material alteration made in our Bible, it would appear by the notorious inconsistence of one part of the canon with another: it would have been, long ago, detected and exposed to public shame, both by the Romanists and other dissenters from our communion. But the former are not able to produce one instance; and the latter agree with us in the use and excellence of the translation, though in other things they extremely differ from us: and where they do but dream we err, they forbear not to proclaim it. Insomuch that a difference in the translation of the Psalter which concerns not faith or manners,† and a supposed defect

* V. P. S. Hist. Critique, p. 583.—Mais elle est plus ample et plus commode, &c.

† See Hooker's Eccl. Pol. Book fifth, sect. 19.

in the table for keeping Easter, have been made by them public objections,* and stumbling blocks in the way to their conformity. It is true, there is a Romanist who hath raved against the Bible of the Reformed, in these extravagant words: “The sectaries have as many different Bibles, in canon, version, and sense, as are days in the year.—The sectarian Bible is no more the word of God than the Alcoran, Almanac, or *Æsop’s Fables.*”† Of great corruption he speaks in general, but his madness has admitted of so much caution, that he forbears the mention of any one particular place.

The learned Romanists understand much better, and the ingenuous will confess it. And they are not ignorant that we translate from the original tongues, after having compared the readings of the most ancient copies, and of the Fathers: whilst they translate the Bible from the vulgar Latin, which, indeed, in the New Testament, is a tolerable, but in the Old, a very imperfect version. If our English Bible were turned into any one of the modern tongues by a judicious Romanist, who could keep counsel, it would pass amongst many of that Church for a good Catholic translation. And this is, the rather, my persuasion, because I have read, in Father Simon,‡ that not unpleasant story concerning the translation of Mr. Rene Benoit, a doctor of the faculty of Paris. This doctor had observed, that a new Latin translation of the *Organon* of Aristotle, performed by a person who understood not the Greek tongue, had been very well received: upon this occasion he was moved to turn the Bible into the French tongue, though he was ignorant of those of the Greek and Hebrew. For the accomplishing of this design, he served himself upon the French translation of Geneva: changing only a few words, and putting others of the same signification in their room. But, it seems, he was not exact enough in this change of words. For he having overlooked some words which were used by the Genevians and not the Romanists, a discovery was made by the divines of Paris, and this edition of the Bible was condemned by them, though published under the name of one of their brethren.

I do not say that such places of Scripture as contain matters of faith, are plain to every man. But those who have a competence of capacity, who are not prejudiced against the truth, who pray to God for his assistance, who attend to what they

* Mr. H.’s peaceable design renewed, p. 14.

† A. S. Reconciler of Religion, printed 1663. c. 11, 38, 39.

‡ *Histoire Critique*, ch. 25. p. 392, 393.

read, who use the ministerial helps which are offered to them, shall find enough in Holy Writ to guide them to everlasting life. In finding out the sense of the Scriptures, the Church gives them help, but it does not by its authority obtrude the sense upon them. The guides of it are as expositors and schoolmasters to them: and by comparing phrase with phrase, and place with place, and by other such ways, they teach them how to judge of the meaning themselves. They give them light into the nature of the doctrine, they do not require them to take it upon trust. They endeavour to open their understandings, that they may themselves understand the Scriptures. And if they cannot themselves understand the doctrine, it will be of little use to them in their lives. For they then believe in general that it is a necessary truth; but what truth it is, or for what ends it is necessary, they apprehend not. A foolish master in the mathematics may require his scholars to take it upon his word that a problem is demonstrated: but a wise and useful teacher will give them light into the manner of the demonstration, in such sort, that they themselves shall at last be able to judge that it is truly performed: and till they can do this, they are not instructed. St. Jerome relates it in praise of Marcella, a Roman lady,* that she would not receive any thing from him after the Pythagorean manner, or upon bare authority. She would with such care examine all things, that "she seemed to him not so much his scholar as his judge."

It is certain that there are great depths and obscure mysteries in the Holy Bible. But the doctrines of Christian faith are to the sincere and industrious, and such as wait on God in the way of the Reformed Church, sufficiently plain. But to the idle, the prejudiced, the captious, light itself is darkness.

The Romanists affright with this pretence of obscurity and profoundness: as if we must not adventure into any part of the waters, because in some places we may go beyond our depth. If there are hard and difficult places which the unstable wrest; who required their meanness to make a judgment of that for which they might perceive themselves to be insufficient? But whilst St. Peter speaketh of some few places in St. Paul's writings which are obscure, he does at the same time suppose many others to be plain enough for the capacities

* S. Hieron. in præf. ad Comment. in Epist. ad Galat.—Ut sentirem me non tam Discipulam habere quam judicem, v. Psalm 119. 99. [vol. 7. p. 369, 370. Veron. 1737.]

of the unlearned. And if they be evil men, though very learned, they will wrest the plainest places ; and (as some did in St. Jerome's* days) they will draw violently to their private sense, a text of Scripture which is incongruously and with reluctance applied to it.

It is true, all sects of Christians cite the Scriptures ; but that does not prove the obscurity of those sacred writings : it rather shews the partiality, boldness, and sophistry of those who allege them. All laws are obscure, if this argument hath force in it. For every man, in his own case, has the law on his side. Men take up their opinions and heresies from other reasons ; and then, because the name of Scripture is venerable, they rake into the several books of it, and they bend and torture places, and force them on their side by unnatural construction. So do the Socinians, producing all the niceties of grammar and criticism in a matter of faith. Yet the Guide in Controversies† useth it as an argument against the plainness of this rule of faith, that the Socinians cite the holy Scriptures in favour of their heresy. But is not this argument two-edged ? And will it not cut as well on the other side, and do execution against the words of Fathers and Councils, and the Apostolical Creed itself ? For the Socinians (those especially who are turned Arians), since Petavius hath furnished them with quotations, will cite the writings of the ancients : and Slichtingius, a mere Socinian,‡ hath expounded every article of the Creed in a sense agreeable to the heresy of his master.

But if the Scriptures were so obscure in necessary matters, what remedy would be administered by the Roman Church ? They cannot offer to us any ancient, infallible exposition. What the ancients have said, the Reformed generally understand much better than some Popes, who, it is said, could scarce read the holy Gospel in Latin. For the Fathers of the earliest ages, they were more busied in writing against heresies, than in explaining of Scripture. Nor, to this day, hath the Roman Church given any authentic collection of expositions, either of the ancients, or of her own. And if we must go to any Church for a comment on the Scriptures, I know no reason why it should be to that of Rome, where worldly policy and interest

* S. Hieron. in Ep. ad Paulin. ad sensum suum incongrua aptant Testimonia—Et ad voluntatem suam S. Scripturam repugnantem trahunt. [Ut supra, vol. 7. p. 273.]

† R. H. Guide, &c. Disc. 4. p. 375, 376, 377, 378, &c.

‡ V. Confess. fid. Christ. ed. nom. Eccles. Polon. &c.

have so great a hand in the interpretation. Had not they governed themselves by this art, we should not have found in the writings of their Popes, and in the very canon law itself, those words which were spoken to Jeremiah, expounded of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome,* “I have set thee over kings, to root out, to pluck up, and to destroy.”† The Donatists found their Church in these words of the Canticles, “Tell me (thou whom my soul loveth) where thou feedest; where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” For they expounded this (as it liked them best) of the flock of their party in the southern country of Africa. Such expounders of Scripture are those Popish writers, who interpret “feed my sheep” of the universal monarchy of the bishop of Rome, and conclude that a pastor must drive away wolves, or depose princes hurtful to the Church. “But the straining of such metaphorical expressions (as an excellent person‡ saith) proves only that they want better proofs. And by a like way of interpretation, from the same text it might be concluded that all Christians are fools, because sheep are silly creatures.”

No expositions are, besides the sense of the text, more forced, or farther fetched, than some of those which may be found in the authentic books of the Roman Church; and those who composed them appear to have looked askint on the Scriptures. For whilst they looked on them, they seemed to have looked another way. I will instance only in a few of those many odd expositions with which the Roman Breviary abounds.

The words of the angel [Simeon] to the holy Virgin, “a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,” are § interpreted of that word of God which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. And this sense is designed as an evasion of their reasoning, who from that text conclude concerning the blessed Virgin, that she died, and was not miraculously assumed. The ascension of Elias is thus expounded,|| “He was taken up into the aerial, not the aethereal heavens; from whence he was

* V. Innoc. 3. in decret. Greg. l. 1. tit. 33. c. 6. [vol. 2. p. 426. Lugd. 1671.] Greg. 7. Ep. 1. 8. Ep. 21. Extrav. de Major. et Obed. c. 1. [Ibid. vol. 3. p. 19.] P. Pi. 5. in Bulla Cont. R. Eliz. in Camd. Annal. A. 1570. [p. 427. Lond. 1719.]

† Jerem. i. 10. ‡ D. Falkner in Christ. Ley. p. 315.

§ Domin. infra Octav. Nativ. in. 2. Nocturno Lect. 8. p. 175. [Pars Hiemal. p. 280. Paris. 1828.]

|| Dom. infra Oct. Asc. [Fer. 2.] in 3. Noct. p. 443. [Pars Vern. ibid. p. 435.]

dropped in an obscure place on earth, there to remain to the end of the world, and to expire with it." They say of Job,* "That when he spake of a bird, and of her path in the air, he by a figure called Christ a bird, and by the motion of it in the air, figured also our Lord's ascension."

We may perceive by these few instances what an entrance into the sense of Scripture is like to be given by such interpreters.

Assert. III. Thirdly, *If men would use the Church as their ministerial guide, and admit of the Scripture as the only rule by which all matters of faith are to be measured, they would agree in the proper means to the blessed end of unity in the faith.* This was the persuasion of St. Austin, who thus applieth himself to Maximinus:† "Neither ought I at this time to allege the Council of Nice, nor you that of Ariminum: for neither am I bound to the authority of the one, nor you to that of the other. Let us both dispute with the authorities of Scripture, which are witnesses common to both of us."

Whilst the Romanists ascribe the differences which arise amongst the Reformed to their want of an infallible guide, and to their different interpretations of the Scriptures, they unskilfully derive effects from causes which are not the natural parents of them. "There is," saith St. Austin, "one mother of all strifes, and she is pride." Neither doth the Scripture divide us, nor does the infallibility of their judge unite them. Their union (such as it is) ariseth from the mighty force of their external polity; and they speak not differently because they dare not; and the strength of that polity arose at first from Rome, not as the chair of St. Peter, but as the seat of the empire. Our divisions, like theirs, arise (as all wars do, be they ecclesiastical or civil) from the unruly lusts and passions of men. And from these likewise arise generally the misinterpretations of plain laws and rules; the sense of which must be made to chime according to the interest of prejudiced men, or else they will not give attention to them. If the lusts and passions of men were mortified, all Christians agreeing in the certainty of the Scriptures, though not of any living guide; and the words of the one being as intelligible as those of the other; all might agree in one Creed, and put an end to those unnecessary controversies which entangle truth and extinguish charity.

* Infra. Oct. Asc. 3. [Fer. 4.] Noct. Lect. 8. p. 447. [Ibid. p. 443.]

† S. Aug. Cont. Max. l. 3. [vol. 8. p. 704, Par. 1688.]

DOUBTS CONCERNING THE ROMAN INFALLIBILITY.

- I. *Whether the Church of Rome believe it.*
- II. *Whether Jesus Christ or his Apostles ever recommended it.*
- III. *Whether the Primitive Church knew, or used that way of deciding controversy.*

THE advantage of having an infallible judge to determine controversies of religion is so visible, that those, who for their lives cannot bring themselves to believe, either that there is such a judge on earth, or that the Church of Rome is so qualified, cannot yet but wish that there were one exempt from the common frailty of mistaking. For who would not be desirous of being released from the toil of examining every point of his faith by Scripture and tradition, when after all the issue is uncertain? Who can envy himself the blessedness of being raised above all apprehension and jealousy of being mistaken in (that which concerns him above all things) the religion and faith by which he is to be saved? When therefore we see so great a part of Christians disputing against their own wishes, and rejecting all pretenders to infallibility; it is a strong presumption that the truth of such infallibility is not so evident and visible, as the advantage that flows from the supposition of it. For it is commonly more than half way towards believing a thing to be true to have a desire that it should be so.

The common objection of the force of prejudice against evident truth can have no place here; for if there be any prejudice in this case, it is for and not against infallibility. For those of our Church who have opposed this pretence with greatest diligence and success, have taken care to prevent this imputation by professing more than an ordinary desire that it might be true. The Lord Falkland, a person of great honour as well as of learning and acuteness, declares, "That if God would leave it to him which tenet should be true, he would

choose that infallibility should rather than the contrary.” Mr. Chillingworth, who thought once to have found out the infallible judge (but lo, it was a dream), makes this solemn profession : “ For my part,” so he speaks, “ I know I am as willing and desirous that the Bishop or Church of Rome should be infallible (provided I might know it) as they are to be so esteemed.” Dr. Hammond* doubts not to profess the same good inclination, in the name of all Protestants. “ If there were,” says he, “ but one wish offered to each man among us, it would certainly, with a full consent, be laid out on this one treasure, the setting up of one catholic umpire or daysman, some visible, infallible decider of controversy.” It is very hard that persons so well disposed should not be able to attain to the belief of so easing and commodious a principle ; for, besides their good will, they wanted neither learning nor diligence, nor judgment, to make themselves masters of their desire : but it seems it is not given to all to believe infallibility, and possibly the great talents of these persons might be no small hindrance to their belief.

Now, since we still profess to have the same desire and fondness of believing infallibility upon good grounds, with the persons above mentioned ; in earnest, reverend fathers of the mission, it will be some disparagement to your glorious undertaking of conversion, to suffer men so well disposed to languish out their lives with a fruitless desire of finding the infallible judge, and at last to die without that comfort : for you certainly, or none, the glory of our conversion is reserved, for the proof of the infallible Church is your peculiar province ; and to do you right, you keep so close to it, as seldom to suffer your study or understanding to pass the bounds of this question, humbly content with this summary Creed ; “ I believe the infallible Church.” If, therefore, you have any demonstrations, or infallible arguments, or weighty reasons, we beseech you to produce them, deny not yourselves the glory of convincing us, for we long to be your conquest. But then, to prevent a needless trouble, we are obliged to let you know, that the old arguments have been all weighed with great care, and found light, and it will not be for your reputation to offer us the same bad money for payment, that has been refused a hundred times before. You may, if you please, call these demonstrations and unanswerable things ; but for our

* Dr. Hammond’s Preface to his Defence of the Lord Falkland.

part, we, after the most diligent examination, can find nothing in them but noise, that may perhaps create disturbance to some weak persons, unacquainted with sophistry, but serve only for sport to the more understanding. They are like the clock of a deathwatch, a poor little worm scarce visible, that may fright, it may be, melancholy or timorous persons, but in truth signify nothing. Or like the dwarf of Augustus, described by Suetonius, that was but seventeen pound weight, not two feet high, and of a prodigious voice; only this creature had some substance, though but very little: but the evidences for the infallibility, hitherto produced, will not turn the scale against a feather.

Now to give you some comfort for your unsuccessful practice upon minds so well disposed, I will make bold to lay before you some instances of your brethren and companions of the same misfortune. The doctors of the stage, whom scurrilous men call mountebanks, proclaim themselves infallible in their way, they make liberal offers of infallible medicines, of never-failing remedies, or certain and never-erring operations. Yet a great part of the world, and reputed the wisest, pass by these great dispensers of health, these confident insurers of life and longevity, and depend upon such modest physicians as declare themselves fallible, and do not dissemble their diffidence of the success of their applications. Yet these patients have as strong a desire of ease and health as any of their neighbours, and would give all the world for a really infallible operator.

There are other men bold enough to pretend that they have the secret of making gold. This they affirm with so much assurance, that the Church of Rome cannot shew more in her claim of infallibility. Nay, they have their demonstrations, their probable reasons, their certain grounds: and at last, for an irresistible inducement to believe, they have their revelations too. Now as well as men love gold, there are not many that will believe the pretence, or be persuaded to send their baser metals to undergo the improvement of this golden transubstantiation.

I am loth to impute this general infidelity, either in regard of the infallible judge, or of the infallible operators, wholly to the want of competent proof on the side of the pretenders; the greediness of believing what men have a mind should be true seems to me sufficient to counterbalance that defect, and to dispose men to accept very slender evidence. Therefore

besides want of proof, there must be some other powerful hindrance, some visible and obvious presumptions of imposture, that immediately stop our easiness and forwardness of believing. For,

I. It is strong presumption of a cheat, when men are observed to be utterly destitute of all those great good things they pretend to have in their power to bestow. Who can have regard to the vapouring of a mountebank upon the stage, that has seen the family of that pretender languishing without relief under the most common and curable diseases? Who can endure the cant of a beggar about the secret of making gold? Or have the patience to see a man who has the Indies within the power of his art, if his pretence were not a lie, condescend to beg or borrow a small piece of money to save himself from starving? It is no otherwise with the pretence of infallibility; our desire of believing it, lies under the check of this presumption. For the Church of Rome, that offers us the benefit of her infallibility, to remove the differences we have with her, or among ourselves, is found to make no use of it in her own occasions, to heal those differences that arise within her own communion. The disputes between the Jesuits and Dominicans are of great importance, yet the infallible judge, all the while they depended, did never think fit to interpose. This doctrine of infallibility itself, is doubtless fundamental, and the Church of Rome is divided about it, some ascribing it to the Pope, others to a Council; yet the infallible judge is so shy of using his gift, as to restrain it, when it is most necessary for the manifestation and defence of its own self. If the Church of Rome has an infallible judgment, it has indeed a wonderful gift, but to the least purpose or effect that can be imagined. For in deciding the controversies of those that pretend to believe it, the Church does not think fit to use it. And those that do not believe it, can receive no benefit by its definitions; and yet it is to these only that it thinks fit to define.

II. If the Church of Rome were infallible, we cannot but think she would afford her people infallible instruction; *i. e.* she would take care that her catechisms, her liturgies, and her sermons, should be infallibly true doctrines. But if you will inquire how this infallible Church teaches her disciples, you will find, that her catechisms were composed by fallible men, and are expounded by men as fallible as they. If you go to her sermons, you hear the words of fallible monks, or

erates, or sometimes of bishops, who may be heretics, and preach damnable doctrines. If you go to her public offices, there you meet with forms made by they know not whom; there you will hear lections of uncertain authority taken out of legends, and the writings of men that either were or might be mistaken. Therefore, when some of the advocates of the Roman Church, are pressed by any objections taken from the public offices, they decline the authority, and dispense with themselves for maintaining them as the unerring belief of the Church. For the infallible Church, forsooth, does not speak to the people in these offices. This we readily accept, but then we desire some reason may be given, why this Church, being (as they pretend) infallible, does not think fit to instruct her people infallibly in her liturgies or homilies, since those are the ordinary ways by which the people are instructed? why she exposes the souls of men to the possible danger of miscarrying, by the ignorance or perverseness of her fallible priests, when it is in her power to prevent all this by her own infallible voice, speaking in homilies, or catechisms, or liturgies, or other authentic books, all as true as the Bible? Wherefore, all things considered, I conceive our opinion, that the Church of Rome may mistake, is less dishonourable to her than theirs, who would flatter her to fancy herself infallible. For we leave her a good excuse why she does not give her children infallible instruction, because she has no such privilege; whereas her flatterers leave her inexcusable, for not doing that which they confess she does not do, and yet contend she is able to do. Which will certainly leave her, in the opinion of all impartial judges, most unworthy of so great a trust as that of infallibility.

III. Although the Roman Catholics in their disputes with us, are very forward to appeal to the infallible judge, because he is their own; yet when they mistrust that their own opinions are in danger of being condemned by the same judge, they make use of all means to prevent or decline his judgment. We have several instances to this purpose in the Council of Trent, which, I think, has most voices in the Roman Church for being infallible. But I will content myself with one only, and that is, the debate about the immaculate conception of the Virgin. When the article of Original Sin came to be defined, it seemed scarce to be avoided, but that this of the Conception must be involved. For if they defined in general, without exception, that Adam's sin passed upon

all, the Virgin would be concluded, and the Franciscan doctrine condemned : but if she were excepted, and declared pure from that original blemish, then the Dominicans would be condemned. Be it so ; but why should either side be afraid of an infallible judge ? Why should they not by consent submit their disputes and their opinions, to that which had clearer light, and could not be mistaken ? They had wrangled enough about it in the dark, and according to their uncertain and fallible judgment ; now an opportunity offered itself, of letting all sides know the truth, and of putting an end to that tedious controversy. But nothing could be done for want of faith and resignation to the infallible judge : I cannot believe so hardly of the Dominicans, as that they were unwilling to know the certain truth of the matter ; and if they had been in their conscience persuaded, that whatsoever the majority of the Council had defined, must be truth, it cannot be conceived why they should be so industrious to avoid a sentence. They saw, indeed, a majority on the other side ; but then it was a majority of private judgments, which, if they were in the wrong, must change, when they came to define as a Council, or else farewell all Council-infallibility. But the Dominicans, it seems, would not trust that, and I do not blame them ; but then we appeal to their equity, and desire that they would not put upon us that infallible judge, to whom they are so loth to submit their own opinions.

But let these Dominicans be as restive as they please, and unwilling to have this point decided, yet the majority of the Council, which is to some an infallible judge, they, methinks, should not be afraid to declare the whole truth ; for they surely could not mistrust their own infallibility, and as little could they question the acquiescence and submission of all good Catholics : yet these had scruples, and could not speak out, for they had received a caution from Rome, whence their spirit of defining came, "that they should by no means meddle with that controversy that depended between Catholics, which might occasion a schism :" How ! For a General Council to determine a controversy between Catholics, would it be to expose the Church to the danger of schism ? Where then is their belief of infallibility ? Where is their resignation to the decrees of the Church ? or to what purpose is infallibility given, if it cannot be exercised for fear of offence, and giving occasion to schism ? We are told, that the only remedy against heresy and schism is the determination of the Church,

and we are pressed to forsake our religion, because the Council of Trent has condemned it ; whereas, in confidence between Pope and Council, we find that their Catholics would leave them for that very reason, which they use to convert us, *i. e.* If they durst condemn their opinions, as they have done ours.

It is said, indeed, that this article of the immaculate conception is not of faith, and therefore needs not to be decided ; and if it were, the decision of the Church may not be infallibly true, because the promise of infallible assistance extends only to matters of faith. I should be better content with this answer, if I could be satisfied once, what is of faith, and what is not : how comes invocation of saints, worshipping of images, and purgatory, to be of faith, and this not ? It cannot be said, because the Church has determined those points and not this. For, before I inquired, why the Church would not determine this, and it was given me for a reason, that it was not of faith. Or is it because it does not seem to be of so great moment in itself ? This cannot be pretended ; for matters of less moment have been declared to be of faith : for instance, the perpetual virginity of the blessed Virgin, is an article, in itself, of less moment than this of the immaculate conception ; for he that denies that the mother of our Lord always continued a Virgin, makes her less perfect in the opinion of some, but not criminal in the judgment of any : for if she had enjoyed the liberty of wedlock, she had not sinned. But he that affirms her to be conceived in sin, if she knew no sin, is a false and blasphemous accuser, and does her real dishonour. Yet Helvidius, and some others, that denied her perpetual virginity, are heretics ; the Dominicans, that charge her with original sin, and that unjustly according to the opinion of the major part of the Council of Trent, if we may believe Pallavicini, and of the present Roman Church, are still good Catholics, and the question must not be infallibly decided against them, for fear of schism.

But one of the greatest hindrances of our belief of infallibility is, to see, that those who affirm that such a privilege belongs to their Church, cannot agree where to place it : some are for the Pope, some for a General Council, some for the Church diffusive ; now if but one of these competitors be infallible, of three parties, into which the Roman Church is divided upon this question, there are two against him, and as very heretics as we. If all the three be infallible, then all the Roman Church is in a dangerous error ; for of this trinity of infallible judges, no party believes but one, to the exclusion of the othe

two. Nor can they reproach us with rejecting all the three, for we allow the Church diffusive to be infallible in a sense ; that is, that there shall be always persons professing the substance of the Christian faith, only we do not make these infallible judges, nor resolve our faith into this pious opinion as into a first principle. But we need not insist upon this, for the Romanists themselves confess, that the Church diffusive can be no judge, and that no controversy in religion was ever yet decided by it. Now, while the Romanists are disagreed about their infallible judge, how can we believe that they have any ? For surely, if God had appointed such a judge, he had rendered him so conspicuous and remarkable, that every one who was not wilfully blind, must have discerned him, else there could be no use of him, and instead of ending controversy, he would serve only to increase it, by becoming himself the subject of a new dispute. For what use, I pray, of an infallible judge that lies *incognito* ; or what benefit from that infallibility that is distracted between many and endless competitions ? The wisdom of God is not wont to confer so great a gift to so little purpose, and those who concern the Divine wisdom in this question, by saying, that God had not made sufficient provision for his Church, if he had not made it infallible, do not consider, that while they disagree about this infallibility, they overthrow their own argument, and betray the Divine wisdom, after they had interested it in their disputes. When they pretend to be all agreed in this, that they believe the Pope and a General Council, in conjunction, to make up one infallible compound, we have great reason to suspect, that what they say is not true, and that they do not believe it themselves ; for several have lived and died in their communion, who publicly taught, that a Pope and General Council concurring, may err in the faith, and were never censured for this doctrine : besides, it is as reasonable to believe, that two cyphers joined may make up a sum, as that two fallible parties can make up one infallible in conjunction. Or if these parties are infallible apart, they do but mock us when they talk of their conjunction. But that they do not believe their own pretence, seems to me plain, because they take no care to be always provided of this infallible compound. How can they believe a Pope and Council united, to be the only infallible judge, and yet use no means to bring them together once in a hundred years ? The Council of Constance, when it had decreed Councils to be infallible, took care to act according to their

pretence; and therefore ordered Councils to be frequent, and provided against all those impediments which the jealousy of the Roman Court might oppose to their design. But that men should believe that infallibility of judgment belongs to a certain conjunction of parties, and yet to be content they should never meet, and to let ages pass without the least benefit of this infallibility that was in their power, is such a riddle that overcomes my weak faith, so rank a pretence as would turn the stomach of a Pharisee. But if they pretend, that the state of the world and circumstances of princes will permit such assemblies but seldom, they fall foul upon the wisdom of God, that should leave the infallibility of the Church at the discretion of temporal princes, and make the very being of the infallible judge to depend upon the disposition of these either to peace or war. If it be said, that such frequent assemblies will be very inconvenient to the Church universal, they must be answered, that the subsisting of an infallible judge, is such an advantage to the Church, as will abundantly satisfy for all the inconvenience that can be pretended: besides, who does not see that all this is mere shift? For in Rome there are commonly more prelates attending upon that Court, than have made up several of the General Councils, which are accounted infallible. Yet after all, this Church that boasts so much of her infallibility, and makes that the ground of her dominion over the faith of all Christians, when she may easily contrive that that judge, which she pretends to be infallible, should be also a standing one and perpetual, is content to commit, either to the inquisition, which was never pretended to be exempt from error, or to episcopal vicars, who are generally no great divines, the power of declaring heresy, and of condemning to the fire, men by them adjudged to be heretics, when all the while these very judges are no less subject to heresy than the poor creatures on whom they pronounce their sentence. And though a General Council, once in an age or two, might correct the errors of these decrees, yet can they restore the souls which they have slain, or raise again the bodies which these mistaken judges had reduced to ashes?

The more we consider this pretence of joining Pope and Council to make up an infallible judge, the more our suspicions do increase, not only that those who set up this judge against us, do not believe him infallible themselves, but that the very parties set up are not satisfied of the goodness of their own title: for if they were convinced, that the only means of having

the Christian faith without danger of mistake, was by their joint instruction, they would surely have better inclination one for the other, than has appeared for these last ages, and would be desirous of more frequent meeting. But who does not know how the Popes stand affected to a Council? Since for some ages they have taken care to express their good will, by a yearly excommunication of all those who shall presume to appeal to it, which the Council of Basil declares to be heresy: but let the Sorbon, and the abettors of that Council, look to this tender point.

It cannot be unknown to any that reads, with what difficulty the Council of Trent, so much magnified after its dissolution, was obtained, or rather extorted: what instances the Emperor used, what importunity and threats, and yet could obtain nothing during one whole Pontificate, and that no very short one. All princes of that communion joined in the same request, but to little purpose; Paul III. shifted it off as long as he could, with delays and excuses, and affected exceptions, and all the tricks of a resolved aversion, till at last absolute necessity did extort it from him. If God had appointed that infallibility should be the issue of this conjunction, in all likelihood he had prepared the parties with kinder dispositions towards one another: for when he ordered the preservation of all animal kinds, by the conjunction of male and female, he inspired them with a mutual good-loving; but the antipathy which Popes have for Councils, makes it very improbable that their agreement should be the only certain infallible means of preserving the truth of the Christian religion.

But besides the unwillingness of these parties to come together to be infallible, the great distrust they have one of another, when met, begets in us a farther suspicion that they themselves are not fully persuaded of this infallibility; at least, that they have not the full assurance of Divine faith about it: two kings at an interview, or two opposite generals in time of war, cannot be more jealous, or more scrupulously cautious about the condition of the place, or the number of attendants. If there must be a Council, the Pope would be best content to have it within his own dominion, or where he can command. Possibly such assemblies may be most infallible within St. Peter's patrimony, though the poor Apostles were forced to meet in an enemy's country: but what matters it where they meet, if the Pope and they are infallibly assisted? A simple man would expect, that two tallies should not agree

more exactly when joined together, than these two pieces of infallibility when they come to confer notes ; but the Councils of Constance, and Basil, and Pisa, will inform us, that there may be a disagreement, and that too, if either side is to be believed, about matters of faith. These old jars made the Popes, who are the standing part of the infallible compound, very jealous of the other, which is but occasional. And, therefore, when the Council of Trent sate, the Popes that directed it, thought they could never have security enough of its good behaviour : for, first, they would by no means allow it the title of representing the universal Church, lest it should pretend to engross the infallibility, as others had done ; then it was ordered, that nothing should be proposed for debate in it, but by the Pope's legates ; then the sum of all debates were to be sent to Rome, and nothing to be concluded without new direction : and, as if all this were not sufficient, care was taken that Italian prelates should be sent thither in such numbers, as might carry it against all the rest, and if any accession of bishops came from France or other places beyond the mountains, new levies were made in Rome, and sent immediately to Trent to observe the motions of those strangers. These Italians, it may be, have a nearer capacity of being infallible, and if infallibility depend upon the agreement of Pope and Council, it cannot be denied, for I think it is more possible for them both to mistake by consent, than for a Synod composed of such as these, to have any difference with him that sends and pays them. But if the Popes had been of opinion, that all private opinions and engagements were to be overruled by the infallible spirit of Councils, and that whatsoever they might have promised for the "wages of unrighteousness," like Balaam, they could not pronounce otherwise than as God moved them : surely their Holinesses would have learned to be wiser, by the example of Balak, than to have wasted their treasure to engage men of uncertain suffrage, and at last to receive a curse, perhaps, instead of a blessing. This way of procuring an infallible sentence, is enough to destroy all the credit and authority of it : for the oracles of old quickly sunk in their reputation, when the gods, and their officers, descended to accept of pensions.

Now, as the too wary conduct of the Roman Church towards her own members, seems to confess a distrust of her own infallibility ; so the unreasonable confidence which she uses towards us, begets in us a just suspicion that she is in the

wrong, and is not altogether insensible of it. For it is a sign of a very bad cause, when those concerned to defend it, are unwilling to enter into its merits ; and instead of that, only bluster and stand upon their privilege ; instead of maintaining it by law and reason, declare that they are to give law, and not to submit to any ; and that whatsoever they say, that must be reason : this is an extravagancy in which no authority upon earth can bear a man out. For if a professor, when he is pressed by some untoward objections against some opinion he has delivered, should think fit to answer only with his brow, or else to deliver it again as his positive judgment out of the chair, declaring, "that it belonged to him to dictate in that place ;" I am apt to believe, that his beard, though never so venerable, would scarce be able to preserve him from the contempt and derision of his own disciples. Or if a judge, questioned for an unjust sentence, should, instead of law or equity, produce only his commission to justify his act, I am afraid, whatever became of his person, his reputation would be in some danger ; especially if all were of Judge Dodridge's* mind, "that it is no more fit for a judge to decline to give an account of his doings, than for a Christian of his faith." Now this is the case between us and the Church of Rome ; we charge them of corrupting the faith, of establishing superstition, and insufferable tyranny ; we produce our evidence, and allege Scripture and primitive antiquity to make out our charge. On the other side, she takes upon her, and stands upon her privilege ; she defines and proves it with a curse, which is a spiritual kind of hectoring, and we are heretics convict, because we are not satisfied with these demonstrations. For my own part, I think they are to blame that do not like this proceeding in an enemy ; for the nearest thing to an acknowledgment, that the Roman cause is indefensible, is this desperate way of maintaining it ; the less of argument men have, the more positive they grow, and endeavour to make up their want of reason, by the boldness and peremptoriness of their affirmation : and though some may ascribe the infallibility-shift to the confidence of the Church of Rome, I shall rather impute it to her desperation. And we are the more confirmed in this suspicion, that the Roman Church was brought to this shift by distress, rather than choice, when we consider the time and the occasion upon which we find her openly to have

* Rushworth's Coll. T. 1. p. 506. [Lond. 1659.]

declared herself infallible. When the Eastern Church quarrelled with those of the West about some points of doctrine, as well as ecclesiastical observances ; among other things, they urge, " that the catholic Church was on their side." For of the five patriarchs which governed the Church, whom they usually compared to the five senses, there were four for the Eastern opinions : and if two to one be accounted odds, it will be intolerable presumption for one to oppose four. For so Michael Cerularius urges, not intending to confer any infallibility upon those four patriarchs, but from a majority pleading a presumption of right. Pope Leo opposes to this the dignity of St. Peter, and the privilege which the Roman Church had of being infallible, though she stood alone. This appears by the letters of Michael, patriarch of Constantinople, and Peter of Antioch, and Leo IXth's reply to their objections ; and it is no wonder the Pope took sanctuary in such a pretence, when authority did commonly bear down reason : and the Roman Church was too great to depend upon the sole merit of the cause, and such reasons as were common to her with every private Christian in the world. But this pretence of infallibility was yet rather insinuated than defined, till Gregory VII. (condemned and deposed by several German and Italian Councils) was forced to lift up his see beyond all human measure, and to declare positively, " that his Church could never err." About a hundred and fifty years after this, the schoolmen invented the term *infallibility*, to express this unaccountable privilege. Mr. Cressy calls it an unfortunate word ; and so it is indeed : for never any had harder usage than this. It is forced to stand against Scripture and tradition, against authority, and reason, and sense : this poor infallibility must hide all faults, must cover every defect, and vouch every absurdity, and justify even transubstantiation.

I have insisted, I fear, too long upon the grounds we may have to suspect that the Church of Rome does not really believe her own infallibility. What conceit she may have of herself, or how she may stand in the opinion of her adherents, is to us of no great importance, since we do not conceive ourselves concluded, either by her fond fancies of her own excellence, or the extravagant applauses of her flatterers ; only we would desire she would not press us too vehemently to this belief, while she is under such flagrant suspicion of deriding it within herself. If she do really believe this, we envy her not the paradise of such a conceit ; but rather pity her

disease, and the disorder of her imagination, for so it is. And something not unlike her case we have in the character of the Church of Laodicea; “ Because thou sayest, ‘ I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.’ ”

But be the Roman pretence never so sincere, we have further grounds of suspicion, that really there is no such thing. For,

I. Christ himself, the author of our faith, though he was infallible, because he was God, yet did not think fit to use this way of authority, or mere defining, to introduce his doctrine, nor to recommend it to his disciples as a principle for trying doctrines, when he was gone to heaven. The way therefore which our Saviour took, was to prove, and to convince by arguments proper and conclusive: when he was questioned, he appealed to the Scriptures, “ Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me.” “ If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.” And therefore produces the testimony of John the Baptist, of his Father at his baptism, of the miracles that he did, “ the same works which I do, they bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.—If ye do not believe me, believe the works.” But above all, he alleges the Scripture in vindication of his person and his doctrine. When he was blamed for healing on the Sabbath, he justifies himself from the law that permitted beasts to be relieved on that day, and by an argument *à fortiori*, he proves, that a charity towards a child of Abraham was much more to be allowed. When the Sadducees disputed with him, he reproached them for “ not knowing the Scriptures,” but blames them not at all for being ignorant of the infallible Judge. In short, all his instructions, all his preaching, all his disputes, were full of arguments and proofs drawn from the merits of the cause, from Scripture and reason; and to finish his evidence, and the conviction of his hearers, oftentimes he crowned all with miracles. The Pharisees, indeed, when they were at a loss for an argument, would take refuge in their authority; and therefore when they could not answer a poor man, thus they take upon them: “ Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? Are we blind also? And have any of the Pharisees believed on him?” But our Saviour, instead of encouraging this assuming way, warns his disciples against it: “ Call no man Rabbi or Master

upon earth ; call no man Father ;" *i. e.* submit not yourselves implicitly to such arrogant teachers as these, that usurp dominion over your faith. And therefore he recommends to men the use of their judgment, "Why of your own selves judge ye not what is right?" And lest any should think that this noble faculty was given them only for their worldly occasions, he reproaches the Jews for not making due use of it in inquiries of religion : " Ye can discern the face of the heaven, and why do you not discern this time of the Messiah ?" which the Scriptures did plainly mark out to those that would use their judgment to discern them. Now it became our Saviour to deal with us in this manner ; for since upon our account he was pleased to be made man, it was most suitable to that condescension to speak to us as a man, and to meet us in our own way of apprehension. And besides, it seems more agreeable to the nature of the eternal Word, or reason, to satisfy and convince our understandings, than to amaze and confound them with paradoxes without proof or explanation. Although Christ's disciples called him Master, and so, indeed, he was ; yet he did not use them as servants, but as friends ; " For the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth :" a servant is not to demand reasons, or to know the intention of his master in every thing he commands. But Christ calls his disciples friends, because " he had made known to them all things that he had heard of the Father." Besides, it is much cheaper to affirm confidently, than to produce any tolerable proof ; and many may amaze men with strange and extravagant opinions, that are not able to render any reason that may move an ordinary, sober understanding. The Gnostics, and the extravagant sects that sprung from them, would submit their wild conceits to no rational examination ; you must take all upon their credit, or be an infidel. For these mystical Rabbis were above the poor dispensation of giving reasons. Apelles the heretic, in a conference with Rhodon, affirms, "that a man ought not to examine his faith, but to content himself with whatever opinion he had received :" and being demanded a proof for his belief of one God, since he rejected Moses and the Prophets ; he frankly confessed, "he had none to give, but that he was moved, he knew not how, to believe it :" and therefore is justly derided by his antagonist. But the true Christians did not thus learn Christ ; they received his doctrine, not only because he pronounced it, but because he gave proof and demonstration of what he said. And besides the

outward testimony of miracles, it was no small help to their conviction, to see the inward merit and excellency of this religion, that it had nothing unworthy of God, nothing contrary to moral honesty, or the principles of natural religion. And Justin Martyr, though he believed in Christ with so much assurance as to die for him; yet to let us see that his faith was not altogether implicit, but grounded upon rational conviction from the merit of the doctrine, makes this bold and somewhat harsh declaration, in his book against Marcion: "That he should not have believed Christ himself, had he preached any other God beside the Creator." And we have Irenaeus's approbation, "that it was well said."

The Apostles did not think fit to make use of this way of infallibility, though the promise upon which it is now grounded, was made immediately to them; and the assistance of the Spirit was visible in the miracles they wrought. But they did not affect to be above their Master, and they could not forget that caution he gave them, not to be called of men Rabbis. Nay, so far were they from affecting dominion over the faith and understanding of Christians, that they permit and applaud the diligence of those who would not receive the Gospel upon their bare affirmation, but searched the Scriptures, to see whether those things were so, as they were alleged by the Apostles: if we may allow St. Luke to speak their sense. It was St. Paul's advice to the Corinthians, that they should "examine themselves whether they were in the faith;" and he renounces "all dominion over their faith." When the same Corinthians doubted of the resurrection, St. Paul does not think it sufficient to say that it was defined and a received article of the Creed: but enters into the merits of the cause, and proves the truth by arguments unanswerable, and defends it against all the objections that had rendered it suspected. When the Churches of Galatia were divided upon the great question, whether the Gentile Christians were obliged to observe the law of Moses, and many pretended the authority of Peter and James to the prejudice of Christian liberty, St. Paul undertakes our defence, and throws off all, not only the authority of men, though they were Apostles, but of angels; "though an angel from heaven should preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed." And this high declaration was intended, if Chrysostom understand it right, to shew, that where the debate is concerning truth, St. Paul will not be satisfied with the dignity or office of any persons, as if that

must be gospel which they declare. Alas, then, for the infallible judge, if there be no respect of persons, no regard of offices, when truth is in question ! We are told a quite contrary story, that the only way to know the truth was to consult men placed in certain dignities, and to take for oracle whatsoever they shall think fit to define. St. Paul it seems knew nothing of any infallible judge from the heavenly angels downwards ; and Chrysostom, his interpreter, takes not the least care to except him. The Greeks have a tradition, that when Chrysostom wrote his Comments upon St. Paul's Epistles, the Apostle was seen for several days standing behind the Bishop's chair, and whispering into his ear : but without believing this, a man may have reason to be satisfied that the gloss speaks the sense of the text ; and if all his Epistles had been as clear as this passage, I am apt to believe that this Apostle might have saved himself the labour of coming down from heaven to be his own commentator. I must confess, that in reading this Epistle, I have often wondered how St. Paul should come to omit one argument, which, according to the men of the infallible way, must have been worth all the rest : and that is, the determination of this question by the Council of Jerusalem ; for all are agreed, and the notation of years which we find in the first and second chapters, makes it clear, that this Epistle was written after that Council ; yet in all this long vindication of the liberty of the Gentile Christians, it is not once urged. And I cannot conceive any reason of this omission, unless it be, that having in the very beginning laid aside all human authority, and respect of persons, he might not think it proper afterwards to allege the Apostolical decree : but if this had been the only infallible way of deciding controversy, this omission cannot be excused. Now because some have endeavoured to prove the infallibility of Councils, from the example of that of the Apostles, I proceed briefly to shew, that they did not proceed in the way of infallibility, though they were really infallible, because they were inspired persons ; but all their proceeding was according to allegation and proof, and the conclusion is made to depend upon these premises, and not their infallibility in pronouncing it. Whereas, in the new way, the conclusion is certain, because some men declare it, though the reasons alleged may be good for nothing : the sum of that synodical action was this : First, St. Peter represented to them how the Holy Ghost had already determined that question, by falling upon Cornelius and other persons

uncircumcised ; then Paul and Barnabas declared, “ what wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” And lastly, St. James shews, out of the prophets, how the conversion of the Gentiles was foretold, and concludes, “ wherefore my sentence is —.” Then it pleased the Apostles and Elders to send certain persons with an account of this whole matter, to the Churches concerned ; and a letter, with this expression, among others, “ It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us :” which does not import as if whatsoever they agreed to declare, must therefore be the truth, and to be received without asking farther questions, though what they did decree was certainly truth and right ; but only suggests the former decision of the Holy Ghost, in the case of Cornelius ; and some other declared by Barnabas and Paul, for then it seemed good to the Holy Ghost to receive the Gentiles without circumcision. But in the assembly of Jerusalem, we have not the least intimation of any declaration of the Spirit, either by miracle or revelation. But the Holy Ghost having before visibly declared upon the point, to that, in all likelihood, the expression must allude. But whatever the Apostles thought of the way of infallibility, it is plain the believers were not yet well instructed concerning it, for this definition could not end the controversy. And in the beginning of the next chapter, we find St. Paul circumcising Timothy, whose father was a Greek, because of the Jews that were in those quarters, and how little use was made of it in ending the same controversy in the Church of Galatia, I have observed already. But further yet : St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, teaches another method of belief than the advocates of infallibility for some time would impose upon the world ; for he utterly disallows this way of making the faith of God to depend upon the belief or unbelief of men, as if that were to be the standard of truth and error : “ For what if some did not believe ? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect ? God forbid ! Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar, as it is written,” &c.

This is an answer to such objections as were suggested against the Christian faith, from the unbelief of the Jews. For when our Saviour appeared, they had the visible Church, and all ecclesiastical authority, the priesthood, the Sanhedrim, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the renowned doctors were theirs, the religious sects, the outward purity, the *opus operatum*, and supererogation were on their side. Now if these

must prescribe to our belief, we Christians have lost our cause, for the high priest and the elders assembled, *i. e.* the Pope and Council of that time, condemned Christ for a blasphemer. But St. Paul would no more submit to such definitions, than we Protestants to those of the Council of Trent, but enters his protestation against all such, as by any act of men would prescribe against the truth of God, and gives reason and Scripture for his proceeding, "God must be pure, but all men may be liars;" and so fairly takes his leave of all infallible men. And so far is he from affecting that prerogative himself, which he denies to others, that he appeals to the Scriptures as his vouchers, and does not desire to be believed upon the authority of his place, but by the method he uses of proving what he advances, he sets a fair precedent to all other teachers, and which Origen, upon this place, understands to be his design. For if a person so great and so qualified as St. Paul, did not think the authority of his saying anything to be sufficient, unless he prove it out of the law and the prophets, how much more should we, the least of God's ministers, observe the same rule?

And lastly, St. Peter, from whom some of the competitors for infallibility derive their title, advises all Christians "to be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them." Now all interpreters of this place, both ancient and modern, that I have seen, are very much out, if this reason be no other than the infallibility of St. Peter, or of the Church. Now this answer, "I believe because the Church believes," is surely the easiest of any, and all other answers would be impertinent, if this alone were the infallible reason: the schoolmen have upon some occasions thought fit to ground their rational way upon this passage, and valued their usefulness and service to the Church on this account. But, for God's sake, what use can there be of these fallible reasons, in a Church that is infallible in her conclusions, and holds not herself obliged to render any other reason for them but a curse? And indeed, I cannot see any occasion of giving any reason, since her disciples do profess that they have no assurance, but that in these she may be mistaken.

Now if the Apostles did not think fit to use this way of infallibility, it seems something incongruous for the Church in succeeding ages to pretend to it, for as the gifts of the Spirit grew less, methinks the way of teaching should rather be less than more magisterial, unless some new Paraclete, to supply the

defect of miracles and inspiration, had thought fit to confer upon it the gift of infallible decision: but the generation next to the Apostles knew nothing of this matter, but confess the state of the Church in their time, to be inferior to that of the Apostolic age, and that heretics then could not be so effectually suppressed, as they were by the Apostles and immediate disciples of our Saviour. For Hegesippus, speaking of the martyrdom of Symeon bishop of Jerusalem, observes, that to that time the Church had continued a virgin and unpolluted; for while the Apostles lived, heretics were forced to keep themselves close; but when their generation was closed, then these deceivers began to appear with wonderful confidence. What absurd fellows were these, to think they could prevail against an infallible Church at one time more than another; had they no dread of the infallible judge? Did they not know that his sentence could make them heretics convict, whenever he thought fit to pronounce it; or at leastwise, did they not know that all Christians believed such a judge? And therefore could have as little hopes then as in the time of the Apostles. But though we let these pass for impudent stupid fellows; yet, what should this Hegesippus mean by representing the Church as a virgin but to such a time, since in despite of all heresies the Church must always remain pure and uncorrupted? Valesius would fain refer this to the Church of Jerusalem only: but he ingenuously confesses, that Eusebius, who cites it, meant otherwise, and applied it to the Church in general: and the reasons that Hegesippus gives, make it plain that so he meant it too. And therefore Valesius bespeaks a favourable interpretation of them both. How little thought Justin Martyr and Irenæus had of this way of infallibility, I have mentioned before; they both wrote against heresies, and Irenæus's books are still extant; but not the least mention made of the authority of the infallible judge; Scripture and common sense furnish all his arguments. Tradition, indeed, is once mentioned, because heretics made this their pretence; but then too it is used only for a negative argument, to shew that the Apostolic Churches never taught any such traditionalary doctrines, without the least pretence that those Churches had received any other articles of belief besides what were contained in the Scripture. Clemens of Alexandria lays down several ways of detecting heretics, but it was his misfortune, or rather that of his age, to be ignorant of that which is now accounted the only infallible. Tertullian prescribes against all heretics,

without troubling the Scriptures, from the common rule of faith, which is not an indefinite one in *petto*, but a short summary of the chief points of Christian religion, from the novelty of heresies, from the doctrines of Apostolical Churches, founded before those opinions sprung. But his misfortune is not only to admit the infallible judge, but to preclude him in the very beginning of his book, by this remarkable passage : "What then," says he, "if a bishop, or a deacon, or a widow, or a virgin; nay, if a martyr or a doctor should fall from the rule, must heresy therefore be truth? What do we receive doctrines for the sake of persons, or persons for the sake of doctrines?" But how shall we know truth from heresy, if we may not depend upon the person of the infallible judge? and do not those who resolve their doctrine into the definition of an infallible judge, approve the doctrine for the person's sake? When Celsus reproached the Christians with their divisions, and multitude of their sects, Origen* had no better reply to make, than, "that this misfortune was not peculiar to them, for the same thing happened to physicians and philosophers, and yet to wise men it was no prejudice against those professions." And then shews how these sects sprung from their different understanding of the Scripture; but could not, it seems, think of the remedy which was peculiar to them, and of an infallible judge, and that, therefore, those who rejected his definitions, were inexcusable, and unworthy of the name of Christians. But Chrysostom, on *Acts xv.* draws this answer to the point, when he declares, "that Christians had no other way of choosing their Church, in this variety of Christian sects, than physicians or philosophers had in determining what sect they should follow;" which was no other than using their best judgment and diligence in the application of the common rule. But Lactantius, for want of knowing this infallible judge, gives the meanest direction of any to discern the true faith, in the midst of different pretensions.† "The catholic Church," says he, "alone has the true religion :" if he had stuck here, we might have thought, perhaps, that he had known the mystery of infallibility; but when he proceeds a little further, he spoils all : "Heretics," says he, "pretend to have the catholic Church as well as the truth." His answer to the objection follows, "that those have the catholic Church who have

* *Orig. contra Cels.* 1. 3. [vol. 1. p. 454. Par. 1733.]

† *De vera Sap.* 1. 4. [c. 30. vol. 1. p. 293. Wiceb. 1783.]

confession and penance, and that heals those sins and wounds to which human frailty is subject." The good man at that time happened to think of the Montanists or Novatians, and therefore describes the true Church in opposition to their severity, to be that which restored penitent sinners to communion, after public confession of their fault, and public satisfaction to the Church. But, by this rule, how shall we know the true Church in the controversy between the Catholics and the Arians, for they were both agreed in this point of discipline? But how can we expect that these writers before the Nicene Council, should say much of the infallible judge; since she had no such, if either a General Council alone, or in conjunction with the Pope, be it? For it is well known, that from the time of the Apostles to the Synod of Nice, there was no General Council. And Alphonsus à Castro, imputes the number and extravagance of the heresies of those times to the want of an infallible judge, which he takes to be a General Council.* But I cannot get this scruple out of my head, how God should intend such a judge, as the only certain means of preserving the integrity of Christian religion against heresy, and yet suffer his Church to be without it for almost three ages, when she stood in the greatest need of such a help, and was otherwise by her holiness and glorious martyrdoms, best qualified to receive such an extraordinary favour: and afterwards, when the Emperors were Christian and orthodox, there seemed to be less need of it, for their laws against heretics might perhaps be more infallible in their effect of suppressing them, than the most solemn sentence of the infallible judge. For the Popes of those ages, though they were engaged in several controversies, yet neither did they pretend to be infallible, nor were they acknowledged as such by any other Churches. The dispute between Pope Stephen and St. Cyprian, about re-baptizing, is well known, and whoever compares their opinions with what the Council of Nice determined upon that question, will find they were both in the wrong.† Pope Anicetus gave but a poor sign of his infallibility, when he received the prophecies of Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla, and received the Asiatics and Cataphrygians into his communion: and Marcellinus's infallibility must surely forsake him, when he offered incense to idols, as the Roman

* *Adv. Hæres.* 1. 1.

† *Tertul. adv. Prax.* [p. 501. Par. 1695.]

Offices do accuse him ; and though Baronius mentions the endeavours of some zealous men to take off this blemish, yet after all the revisions of the Breviary, it remains there still.

But be the catholic Church before the Nicene Council, as destitute of infallible judgment as it was of civil force, surely when Councils were assembled, with the concurrence of Popes, all dispute and heresy must be at an end ; for when the infallible judge has taken his place, all knots in religion must be untied, and all doubts removed ; for who so ignorant or perverse, as to dispute against his sentence, whom all the Christian world must know to be incapable of mistake ? Now the misfortune is, that after many General Councils, received by the Bishop of Rome, and the greatest part of Christendom, we hear no tidings of an infallible judge, nor of the Roman resolution of faith into the mere authority of Papal Councils : and this is such a disappointment, under which no man can be patient, and in spite of all good disposition of believing the Roman method, it will breed suspicion, that the infallible was not revealed to the Church of those times. Athanasius, the great champion and confessor for the Nicene Creed, in all his apologies, forgot this great and unanswerable defence, that he followed an infallible guide.* He explains and confirms from Scripture, the notion of consubstantial ; but could not be so happy as to urge, that it must be true, because the infallible had pronounced it. He deservedly commends the Nicene Council, and the faith defined there ; but his reasons turn infallibility upside down : for he received the determination of that great assembly, because in his judgment he was convinced that it was true and consonant to the Scriptures, but did not therefore think it must be as true as Gospel, because it was the sentence of an infallible judge. And, at last, in the way of our Protestant resolution of faith, declares, "that in those controversies that divided the Church, we ought to pray for the spirit of discretion, that every one may know what to receive and what to reject : a faithful disciple of the Gospel is able to distinguish between truth and pretence, because he has the spirit of discerning ; but the simple is carried away with every colour." But what should we do with this private spirit of discretion, in a controversy already decided by the infallible ? And what danger of the simple, if he can but be simple enough,

* Athan. or. ad Maxim. Id. de Nicen. Synod. Decret. Orat. 1. contr. Arrian. [vol. 1. p. 111. Heidelb. 1601.]

to believe as the pretended infallible Church believes? And it is yet more strange, that after the Nicene decisions, this Father should recommend the Scriptures as a better and more sufficient means, than any other for our direction to the true faith. St. Augustine was surely to blame, when in a dispute with an Arian, he makes this proposal, that they should by consent lay aside the authority of Council definitions, and gives up the judgment of the Nicene Fathers, in exchange for that of the heretics of Rimini, and leaving the advantage of a sentence, by which alone the truth could be infallibly known, according to the Roman supposition, descends to put the matter upon an issue, which we are now told, is very uncertain, and of dangerous consequence; that is, to be tried by Scripture and reason.* One would think it had been a much easier and shorter task for him to prove the Council of Nice infallible, if he had thought it as demonstrable as the missionaries say it is, than to convince the heretics by disputable passages of Scripture, interpreted according to his private reason: here, indeed, he overthrows infallibility, but implicitly and by consequence; but in another place he expressly disclaims it: "the Church," says he, "ought not to set herself above Christ: — for he always judges according to truth, but ecclesiastical judges, as men, are commonly mistaken."† And then, lest you may imagine General Councils excepted, in another place he declares, "that even plenary Councils may need amendment; and that, the latter may correct what is amiss in the former."‡ And in an epistle to St. Jerome, he further declares, "that he had learned to pay this deference only to the canonical Scriptures, of believing their authors to have erred in nothing. But others, though never so learned or holy (without any exception) I read so, as not to take any thing to be true, because they were of that opinion, but because they proved it by Scripture or reason."

St. Jerome § professes so firm adherence to his private conviction, that the authority of all the world should never be able to make him depart from it. "This," says he, "I affirm, this I boldly pronounce, though all the world should gainsay it;" and he makes no scruple of rejecting Councils, if they determine any thing against the doctrine of the Scriptures;

* Con. Maxim. 1. 3. c. 14. [vol. 8. p. 704. Par. 1688.]

† L. 2. con. Crescon.

‡ L. 2. de Bapt. c. 3. [Ibid. vol. 9. p. 98.]

§ Ep. ad August. Apud Flac. Illyr. in Catal. Test. et Suttiliv. de Eccles.

nay, he makes it the character of heretics,* “that they take upon them so great authority, that whether they teach truth or falsehood, they will not allow their disciples to examine by reason, but implicitly to follow their leaders :” and yet I do not know of any of these arrived to such an extravagance as to pronounce themselves infallible. Gregory† the Divine was surely a stranger to the infallible judge, when he resolves “to shun all assemblies of bishops, because he ‘never saw good issue of any of them.’” And I can scarce believe, that he would have been content to submit the faith to major vote, when he brings in the “Arians‡ insulting over the little flock of Christ, defining the Church by multitude, and preferring the sand to the stars.”§ He must needs be ignorant of the infallible judge, that thus writes to the Emperor Theodosius, against Cyril and his Ephesian Council; “that a great number of bishops is unnecessary for the examination of opinions in religion, and serves only to create tumults : for this end our adversaries bring great numbers, depending only upon that, and not upon the truth and orthodoxy of their belief :” and then speaking of Cyril, “endeavouring to ratify his heresy by multitude, not considering, that in religion, it is not number that is required, but orthodox faith, and the truth of apostolic doctrine.” And it is strange, in all the disputes between Cyril and Theodoret, there is not the least word about the infallible definition of the Ephesine Synod, which had decided the matter under dispute : and it is no small prejudice against the infallible way, that Cyril tells his adversary,|| “that he ought to argue out of the Scriptures only.” There was never Council occasioned more dispute than that of Chalcedon ; the world was a long while divided about it : but those who declare their adherence to it, never pretend it to have been infallible ; but on the contrary, profess their approbation of it, “because it had asserted the true faith ;” not that the faith must be true because asserted by it ; because it had “defined nothing new or strange against the rectitude of the faith ;” because it had “added nothing to the faith, or altered nothing in

* In Isai. c. 30. [vol. 4. p. 4111. Veron. 1735.]

† Nazianz. ep. ad Procop. [Ep. 130. vol. 2. p. 110. Par. 1840.]

‡ Orat. ad Arian. [vol. 1. p. 603. Par. 1778.]

§ Joh. Antioch. in Conc. Ephes. t. 3. p. 70, et 76. Ed. Labbe. [Lut. Par. 1671.]

|| Cyril. Ep. ad Euopt. [Ibid. p. 896.]

the constitutions of former Councils, or explained any thing incongruously, but followed the Scripture and the Nicene Council.”* And the bishops of Syria declare their opinion, not only of this, but of all the other received General Councils, “that they decree them to be true Councils, because they have asserted and ratified this faith by the holy Scriptures.”† What shall we call this but a Protestant rule of faith, when a Council is to be known to be true or false from its doctrine, and not the doctrine from the infallibility of the judge? And Maximus, it seems, had no other means of discerning true from erroneous Councils, but the doctrine they defined:‡ “For,” says he, “if the Emperor’s summons or commands, give authority to Synods, and not the true faith; receive the Synods that have been assembled against the word consubstantial:” and having reckoned up many heretical Councils, concludes, “But they were all condemned for the impiety of their erroneous opinions confirmed by them.”—And then, “the rule of the Church acknowledges those for true Synods, which the orthodoxy of their opinions doth recommend.”—And Theodosius answers, “It is so, as thou affirmest, it is orthodoxy of belief gives credit and confirmation to Synods.” I might pursue the same observation through several other General Councils, which a considerable part of the Church believed to have actually mistaken, but to which none for some ages ascribed the prerogative of infallibility; but those in which I have instanced, being the principal for reputation and authority, it is needless to observe the same thing of those that followed: and the Fathers taking the liberty of judging conciliar definitions by the rule of faith, the holy Scriptures, do plainly overthrow all pretence of an unaccountable, infallible way of defining, presumed to be above all examination and review, because above all possibility of mistaking.

Now as the Church was ignorant of the infallible judge during the conjunction of East and West, and the opportunity of General Councils; so the Greek Church, after it was broken off from the West, was altogether unacquainted with this infallible way, and when the Church of Rome began to assume

* Ep. Anatol. ad Leon. Ep. Episcop. Europ. ad Leon. et Episc. Isaaur. ad eund. vid. tom. 5. [4. p. 905, 906, 923.] Conc. Ed. Labb. [ut supra.]

† Ep. Syriae 2. ibid. [p. 915.]

‡ Collat. S. Maximi cum Theodos. Ep. Cæsar. Ed. Sirm. p. 161, 162.

to itself the quality of infallible, the Eastern Church protested against it. And while they follow the patriarch Photius, they can never resolve their faith into any human or ecclesiastical authority; for he has prevented all such pretences, by that strong protestation he makes in his epistle to the bishop of Aquileia;* where, in answer to the authority of the Fathers, touching the procession of the Holy Ghost, he saith: "What should I descend so low, as to speak concerning the number of those that affirm this thing? Though the whole creation should do it with one voice, none surely would leave the instruction and doctrine of the Creator, to hearken to the voice of the creature, contradicting him that made it."

To conclude, I cannot avoid suspecting the Roman infallibility, when I consider, not only that no other Church pretends to it, but that no heresy or sect of Christians ever claimed it. These did seldom come behind the Church in assuming and pretence, and commonly presumed more upon their authority, and what they wanted in truth and proof, they made up with arrogance and the positive way. There is no other principle into which faith is used to be resolved, but they endeavour to make their own: Scripture, tradition, miracles, revelation, all these they boldly challenged; but this assurance of infallibility, we never find them to have usurped; I am loth to ascribe it to their modesty; it is more likely they had no example to provoke them, and they were not so fortunate as to find out the way themselves to so bold a pretence, unless we may imagine that they had a better opinion of their way, than to think it stood in need of so miserable a subterfuge. So that the impudence of this pretence is peculiar to the Church of Rome, and may serve as a more proper note to distinguish it, than any of those laid down by Bellarmine. But this is no note of honour, but a brand; for as the Church of Rome corrupted itself beyond all others in doctrine and worship, the Divine judgment delivered her up to a reprobate sense, that renders her incapable of discerning or reforming her errors: this presumption, that she is not subject to mistake, hanging perpetually like a veil over her eyes.

* Photii Ep. ad Ep. Aquil. in Auct. Biblioth. Patr. per Combef. p. 535.

A DISCOURSE
CONCERNING A
JUDGE OF CONTROVERSIES IN MATTERS OF RELIGION,
BEING AN
ANSWER TO SOME PAPERS ASSERTING THE NECESSITY
OF SUCH A JUDGE.

THE PREFACE.

WHEN I first undertook to answer these papers, I little thought of writing a book ; but when it was writ, I was more easily persuaded to make it public ; for such kind of objections as these, our people are daily assaulted with, and our ministers daily troubled to answer ; and therefore it will be very serviceable to both to print such a plain discourse as this, which whatever defects it may have, I am pretty confident does sufficiently expose the weakness and sophistry of such arguments.

The truth is, this ought not to be made a dispute, and the fundamental miscarriage is, that our people are not taught, or will not learn, to reject such captious questions as tend only to scepticism, and deserve not to be confuted ; which, I think, I may have liberty to say, now I have confuted them : and to shew the reason I have to say so, shall be the subject of this Preface.

It is thought (and certainly it is so) the most compendious way to reduce Protestants to the communion of the Church of Rome, to persuade them, that they can have no certainty of their religion without an Infallible Judge, and that there is no infallibility but in the Church of Rome : now could they prove that the Church of Rome is infallible, this, indeed, would be an irresistible reason to return to her communion ; but this they say little of now-a-days, this they would gladly have us take for granted, especially if they can prove that we can have no certainty without an infallible judge ; and therefore this they

apply themselves to, to run down Protestant certainty, and first to make men sceptics in religion, and then to settle them upon infallibility.

Now the way they take to do this, is, not by shewing that the reasons on which Protestants build their faith, either of Christianity in general, or of those particular doctrines which they profess, are not sufficient to found a rational certainty on; for this would engage them in particular disputes, which is the thing they as industriously avoid, as if they were afraid of it; but instead of this, they declaim in general about the nature of certainty; ask us, how we know that we are certain; if we rely upon reason, other men do not reason as we do, and yet think their reason as good as ours; if on Scripture, we see how many different and contrary expositions there are of Scripture; and how can we be certain then, that we only are in the right, when other men are as confident and as fully persuaded as we? Now all this is palpable sophistry, and no other direct answer can or ought to be given to it, but to let them know, that after all they can say, we find ourselves very certain; and that their attempt to prove us uncertain, without confuting the reasons of our certainty, is very fallacious.

1. As for the first, whether I am certain or not, nobody can tell but myself, for it is matter of sense, as sight and hearing is; and they may as well ask me, how I know that I see and hear, as how I know that I am certain: I feel that I am so, and that is answer enough.

2. And, therefore, when they ask me, how I know that I am certain; if this question have any sense in it, it must signify on what reason I found my certainty; for nothing can create certainty in the mind, but that reason and evidence which we have of things, as we can see with nothing but light. Now if certainty results only from the reason of things, it is ridiculous to expect any other answer to that question, How I am certain, than my giving the reasons of my faith; for there is no other reason of certainty, than those particular reasons, for which I believe any thing: and this of necessity brings the controversy to particulars. There is no one reason of my certainty; because the same reason will not serve for all things; and therefore before I can give them my reason, I must know what they require a reason of, and then I will give it them. And thus we are just where we were; and if they will prove that we have no certainty, they must confute all the

reasons of our faith, and dispute over all the controversies between us ; a task which they are not willing to undertake ; and yet there is no other way to prove the faith of Protestants uncertain, but by proving that they have no certain reasons of their faith.

Yes, you will say, it is proof enough, that we cannot be certain, because we every day find so many confident men mistaken, who yet think themselves as certain as we do, and therefore we may be mistaken, notwithstanding all our assurance and confidence that we are not. Now this, indeed, would be an unanswerable argument, did we find our certainty upon the mere strength and confidence of persuasion ; for men may be very confident because they are ignorant ; and we readily grant, that an ignorant confidence may betray men into the grossest errors ; and therefore, though every confident man thinks himself in the right, we never think another man in the right merely because we see him confident, which is a plain sign that all men distinguish between confidence and certainty. Wise men, who would not be mistaken, are very careful that their confidence do not out-run their reason, for reason is the foundation of certainty ; and no man can have greater certainty than he has evidence for what he believes. Now since men may be equally confident with or without reason, the only way to try the certainty of their faith, is to examine the reasons whereon it is founded ; if we can confute their reasons, we destroy their certainty ; if we cannot, it is ridiculous to charge their faith with uncertainty ; for that is a certain faith which is built upon certain and immovable reasons ; and if the certainty of reason makes men certain, and some men's faith may be built upon certain reasons, though others are mistaken, then the confident mistakes of some men is no proof, that the faith of all men is uncertain.

I am sure all mankind think thus, who think any thing, which is a good sign that it is a very natural thought. No man thinks himself the less certain, because he sees other men differ from him. The foundation of this very argument against Protestant certainty owns this.

The argument is, that we can never know when we are certain, because of the multitude of differing opinions which are maintained with equal confidence on all sides. Now that this is no plain and convincing argument against certainty, is evident from the argument itself, which confesses, that notwithstanding all this diversity of opinions, all men are very confident

of their own ; which, I think, proves, that every man believes that he may be certain ; nay, does actually think himself certain, though he knows that other men differ from him ; and that, I think, proves, that they do not believe that no man can be certain, because some men are confident, and yet mistaken. And it is equally strange to me, both that if this be such a convincing argument (as is pretended) no man should believe it, and that the advocates of infallibility should think to impose upon the world, with such a palpable piece of sophistry as all men despise.

There is no way to prove the faith of Protestants to be uncertain, but to prove that the principles whereon we build our faith, are uncertain ; for if there be certain means to know the true faith, then, though some mistake, others may be in the right ; and those who are in the right, may know they are in the right ; for the mind does as evidently discover clear and bright truth, as the eye does the light. He who feels truth, will know himself certain, and no man can confute him, without confuting the reason of his faith.

This shews how absurd it is to ask us, how we know that we are certain, and at the same time to refuse to hear the reasons of our faith ; or to attempt to prove that we are not and cannot be certain, without confuting the reasons which make us certain. For certainty results from the reasons of our faith, as sight does from light ; and men may as well be certain without reason, as shew how they are certain, without assigning the reasons which make them certain. And therefore the only trial of our certainty is, by examining the reasons whereon we build our certainty. And this is a plain direction to our people how to answer this captious and sophistical question. As to shew this very briefly by way of question and answer.

Quest. How do you know that you are certain, or are not deceived in those things, of which you think yourselves most certain ?

Answ. What do you mean, Sir ? How I know that I understand ? Or how I know a good reason when I hear it ? Truly I know this, only as I know how I see ; God has given me eyes to see with, and a faculty of reason to understand with, and I trust my eyes, and my understanding, and if you can tell me any better way, I shall gladly hear it.

Quest. But do not all men say as you do, that they trust their own understanding ? And are you not sensible what a

fallible thing human understanding is? Do you not daily see how many men are mistaken? And how then can you be sure that you are not?

Answ. Yes, I am very sensible that many confident men are mistaken; but sure this is not the original fault of their understanding, for then all men must be mistaken; and then we must either be certain without our understanding, which is to know certainly without knowing at all; for there is no other faculty whereby we can know, but only the understanding; or else we must be contented to know nothing; for that knowledge which has nothing of certainty, does not deserve the name of knowledge.

Quest. But what is this to the purpose, what the cause of such mistakes are? For let the cause be what it will, if men are still mistaken, how do you know that you are not mistaken too?

Answ. Yes, this is very much to the purpose; for if the fault be not in the understanding, if human understandings are capable of knowing truth, then it does not follow, that because some men are mistaken, therefore all are; nay, it does not follow, that because some men are very confident in their mistakes, therefore no man can be certain that he is not mistaken. For if the understanding is capable of distinguishing between truth and error, as the eye can distinguish its objects, then it can know truth when it sees it; and this is the foundation of certainty.

Quest. But does not every man, who is in an error, think that he sees truth?

Answ. Yes, and so does a man who is in a dream, think that he sees and talks with his friends; but a man who is awake knows that he does so; and though there are a great many dreamers, you can never persuade a man, who is awake, that he is in a dream; and there is as much difference between the vigour and distinctness of perception in error and truth, as there is between the delusions of a dream, and the quick and strong perceptions of a man awake. And thus a man, who sees truth, does as certainly know that he sees it, as the eye does that it sees light.

Quest. And do you then resolve all certainty into your own sense and feeling, which is a kind of natural enthusiasm, and in most men nothing else but the strength of fancy and imagination?

Answ. No, by no means! I feel myself certain indeed, but

my certainty does not result from bare confidence and assurance that I am in the right, which men may have who are in the wrong; but from the clear and irresistible evidence of reason, which pierces the mind as light does the eye, and captivates the understanding into a full and immovable assent. I have such reasons for what I believe, as do abundantly satisfy me in the truth and certainty of my faith, and when I feel the evidence and conviction of reason, I feel myself certain.

Quest. But still the same question returns, How you are certain of your reason? for all men pretend to some reason or other for what they believe, and think their reason certain, or else they would not believe it.

Answe. Right! and will think themselves certain still, till you have confuted their reasons, and convinced them, that they are mistaken: for there is no other way of dealing with reasonable creatures, but to rectify their mistakes, and by strong and solid reasons to confute the vain and empty appearance of it. And if you can do this, I shall very gladly hear you, and when you please, will give you the particular reasons of my faith.

Quest. What do you mean? That I should dispute all the points in controversies between us? There is a task indeed! There will be no end of wrangling at this rate; no, no: Since you are not certain, and cannot be certain in your way, I will direct you how you may be certain, without troubling yourself with disputes.

Answe. I beg your pardon, Sir, I am very certain; or, however, you can never convince me that I am not certain, without hearing what the reasons of my faith are, and proving them to be uncertain; for my certainty is founded upon reason, and if my reasons be certain, what should make me uncertain?

Quest. Do you not see, that reason itself is uncertain? How do men differ in their reasons? What contrary expositions of Scripture do they give? And what certainty then in this way?

Answe. I hope, Sir, you will not say, that there is no such thing as true reason, or that true reason is uncertain, or that Scripture truly expounded is an uncertain rule: now though other men reason foolishly, and interpret Scripture perversely, what is that to me, if I reason right, and expound Scripture truly? As I believe I do, and shall believe so, till you can prove that I do not. My certainty, I told you, is founded upon certain evidence, and you can never shake my certainty,

till you can shake that. It would be great and contemptible weakness in me, to distrust the most plain and convincing reason, because you tell me, that other men are of another mind; if you can prove, that their reason is better than mine, I will yield to the best reason; but I cannot renounce my reason, while I believe it true, nor suspect it, while I believe it certain.

Quest. When two men differ in their opinions, and oppose reason to reason, must not one of them be mistaken?

Answ. Yes, it may be both; but neither of them think themselves mistaken merely because they differ from each other, for that would end the dispute. If the differences in religion were an argument against the certainty of all religions, there were an end of religion; for infallibility itself could not escape, which is denied by more Christians than believe it; and therefore, those who would be certain, must look well to the reasons of their faith, and those who will prove my faith to be uncertain, must prove that the reasons on which I believe are either false or uncertain; and those who are not contented with this, quarrel with the state of human nature, and may help themselves as they can.

This, I think, is sufficient for a preface to this Discourse, let but Protestants maintain their ground, and not be persuaded, that they have no certain foundation for their faith, till Papists have confuted the particular reasons of their faith, and I dare undertake, they will never see any reason to question their faith, nor find any want of an infallible judge.

But yet since some men so despise that certainty, which results from a clear and distinct knowledge of things, in comparison with infallibility, let us briefly consider what the true notion of infallibility is, and how much it excels a certainty of knowledge.

1. First then I observe, that infallibility belongs to persons, not to things. A proposition cannot be fallible or infallible, but true or false; for fallible signifies, that which can be deceived, infallible that which cannot be deceived, and therefore can be applied only to intelligent beings, who are capable of either. So that to say, that any proposition is infallibly true, besides the impropriety of the expression, adds nothing to truth; for that which is true, is true, and can neither be more nor less true.

Secondly, Perfect infallibility is nothing else but an universal certainty of knowledge: as for instance; God only is

infallible by nature ; but infallibility is a negative, and there are no negatives in the Divine nature ; and, therefore, if we would understand what God's infallibility is, we must reduce it to some positive perfection, and that can be nothing else but infinite knowledge ; for this reason we say, that God is infallible, because he knows all things, and he who knows all things can never mistake. So that it is knowledge which is the perfection, infallibility is only a mode of speech, to signify the most perfect certainty of knowledge.

Thirdly, And therefore infallibility is not opposed to certainty of knowledge, with respect to the evidence and certainty of perception ; for infallibility is nothing else but certainty, and such a certainty as results from the most perfect knowledge of the reason and nature of things, as it is in God, which is only true infallibility. There is no difference between certainty and infallibility in God, and the difference between the certainty of creatures and the infallibility of God, is this, that the one is a finite and the other an infinite knowledge ; for nothing can be by nature infallible, but infinite knowledge : but a finite knowledge, which does not extend to every thing, may in some things be deceived, but as far as it reaches it may be certain, and that is a kind of a finite infallibility. A fallible creature does not signify a being, which can never be certain, but a being which has not a natural knowledge of all things, and therefore may be deceived in those things which are without the sphere of its knowledge ; and therefore it is as absurd to say, that we cannot be certain of any thing, because we are not infallible, as to say that we can know nothing, because we do not know all things.

Fourthly, And therefore fallibility or infallibility, do not alter the nature of certainty. What is the certainty of God, but those clear and bright ideas of truth in the Divine mind ; for he is not certain, because he is infallible, but he is infallible because he is certain ; and thus in proportion to that distance which is between God and creatures, our certainty is nothing else but a clear and distinct knowledge and perception of the reason and natures of things ; and wherever this is, how fallible soever the person is in other matters, he is certain so far ; and to demand any farther reason of certainty, than the clear and distinct knowledge of things, is to demand some other reason of certainty than knowledge ; and thus we may doubt of the certainty of God, as well as of men, if we do not

allow a clear and distinct knowledge to be certainty, for there is nothing beyond this.

Fifthly, And hence it follows, that as to things which are knowable by the light of nature, our certainty results from the clear and distinct perceptions of our own minds, and depends on the truth and certainty of our natural faculties. As for instance: those impressions which our senses make on us, and those perceptions they awaken in our minds, are so strong and forcible, that they create a natural certainty, and we cannot doubt, whether what we see, and feel, and hear, be real or not; those natural ideas and notions we have in our minds, those first principles of reason and discourse, appear so plain and self-evident to us, that we can no more question them than our own being, and seek for no other proof of them, but their own natural evidence; as that both parts of a contradiction cannot be true; that nothing can be and not be, at the same time; that no power can make that never to have been, which once was; that nothing that ever was not, can be without a cause. These propositions are so self-evident, that the mind assents to them without demanding any other proof but themselves, which shews, that the very highest certainty of all is nothing else but an intuitive knowledge, or the mind's seeing and discerning that natural evidence which is in things; and those who will not allow a clear and distinct knowledge to be the foundation of certainty, must reject all self-evident principles, which we can have no other proof of but themselves, at least no better, for we cannot reason *in infinitum*, and therefore must come to some first principles, which are known only by their own light and evidence.

Next to this, are those notions and ideas, which are so easy and natural to our minds, that most men believe them by a kind of natural sense and instinct, without reasoning about them; and those who have no mind to believe them, yet cannot rid their minds of them; such as the being and providence of God, and the essential differences between good and evil. These are the next degree to self-evident principles, for they are natural notions, which, indeed, may be proved by reason, and must be so, when we meet with men who will deny them; but yet a well disposed mind which has a natural bias and inclination to believe them, sees them to be true and evident without reasoning about them. This is very plain, the less of reasoning there is required in any case, the more there is of cer-

tainty: first and self-evident.

natur
near
certa
of th
connec
with th
natur
and t
ing th
which

Six
there
but ev
commu
will, b
the obj
our nat
fore we
revelati
causes.
infallibl
that ma
evidence
must eit
vigorous
with it,
As for th
from insp
they ha
veracity

believe what they know is
revealed: they must use their own faculties to understand
what is revealed, and they must judge of the truth and certainty
of a revelation from such marks and characters as are evident
either to sense or reason.

So that *infallibility* sounds very big, but signifies very little
in this dispute; for all certainty, whether in natural or revealed
knowledge, must be resolved into evidence, not into infallibility.
Though an inspired prophet is an infallible oracle in those
things which he speaks by inspiration, yet it is not his infalli-
bility, but that evidence he has, that he is divinely inspired,
which makes him certain; much less can any man be infallible
certain, who is not infallible himself, how many infallible

Possible anticipation of
Locke's Theory of knowledge.
of 306 J.P. v.4.

teachers soever there are in the world. For we may as well say, that a man may be wise with another man's wisdom, as infallible by another man's infallibility. Every man must know and understand for himself, and infallibility is only such a perfect degree of knowledge, as is not liable to any mistakes ; and if no man has any knowledge, but what he has in himself, then he has no degree of knowledge, but what he has in himself, and therefore can never have an infallible knowledge, unless he himself be infallible.

Suppose then we should grant, that the Pope, or Church of Rome were infallible, what advantage has a Papist for certainty above a Protestant ? Does the infallibility of the Pope make them all infallible ? and if every Papist be not infallible, then they can have no more certainty than fallible creatures are capable of, and so much, I hope, may be allowed to fallible Protestants. The authority of a revelation in matters divinely revealed, answers to natural evidence in things knowable by the light of nature ; as we cannot doubt of things which are plain and evident to our understandings, so we cannot doubt of what we know is revealed by God : but then as we must use our reason to judge of the natural evidence of things, so we must use our reason to judge of the truth, and evidence, and sense of a revelation, and it is the same mind and the same understanding which must judge both of natural and revealed knowledge ; and if our understandings be not infallible, I know not how an infallible judge, or an infallible revelation, which are external things, should bestow an internal infallibility on us. And therefore, after all their brags of *infallibility*, Papists themselves must be contented if they can be certain ; for if infallibility did signify somewhat more than certainty, yet certainty is the most that a fallible creature can have ; for it is impossible for any creature to have infallibility, who is not infallible himself. And this, I hope, will make them a little more favourable hereafter to Protestant *certainty* ; for whatever can be objected against certainty in general, as distinguished from *infallibility*, will as effectually destroy the Popish, as the Protestant *certainty* ; for Papists are no more infallible creatures than Protestants are.

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING A JUDGE OF CONTROVERSIES;

BEING

AN ANSWER TO SOME PAPERS, ETC.

The Paper.

“ I AM not satisfied with the foundation of the Protestant religion. For if God has certainly left no visible judge of controversies (as we assert), and yet grant that there are things necessary to salvation to be believed, as well as things to be practised ; and that the Scriptures are to a demonstration not plain, even in what we dare not disown to be fundamentals, as the Trinity, &c.”

Answer.

These objections against the Protestant resolution of faith, strike not only at the foundations of the Protestant religion, but of Christianity itself. For if the dispute were about the truth of Christian religion, by such arguments as they can prove the Christian religion to be true, we will prove the Protestant religion, which is nothing else but the Christian religion, purged from the corruptions and innovations of Popery. Now it would be very pleasant to hear a Popish priest, in a dispute with Turks or Pagans about Christianity, urge the authority of a visible judge of controversies ; and if there be no way to instruct an infidel (who cannot be presumed to own the authority of any judge) what Christian religion is, and to convince him of the truth of it, but by reason and Scripture, either this is a good way, or there is no certain foundation for Christianity ; and let any man shew me a reason, why Christians may not understand their religion the same way that heathens must be taught it. This was the way which Christ and his Apostles took with Jews and heathens, and they had no other way to take with them.

The Jews had a written law, which no authority could contradict; and therefore our Saviour did not only work miracles, but appealed to the Scriptures both for the authority of his person, his miracles, and his doctrine, and left every man to his own liberty to judge for himself, what he must believe; which shews, that miracles themselves are no authority against a written law, for then the Jews could have had no pretence for their infidelity, and there had been no reason for Christ and his Apostles to have disputed with them out of the Scriptures.

The heathens had no standing revelation, and therefore the bare authority of miracles was sufficient to confirm that testimony the Apostles gave of the resurrection of Christ, and the doctrine which he preached; and those who would not believe merely for the miracles' sake, were convinced by reason and argument; for thus St. Paul disputed with the philosophers at Athens, as well as with the Jews; and thus the primitive doctors dealt with the infidels in their days, as we learn from those many excellent Apologies they wrote in defence of Christianity. But then those who did believe at first upon the authority of miracles, were particularly instructed in the faith of Christ out of the law and the prophets, which though they were originally given to the Jews, yet are the venerable records of the Christian faith, to which the Apostles had recourse in expounding the Christian doctrines.

Thus Christianity was taught at first, and if this be not a solid foundation, the Christian faith has none; neither Christ nor his Apostles (though they were infallible) made their own infallibility the only reason of men's faith, but referred them to the law and the prophets, which they expounded to the conviction of all honest and teachable minds; and if they would not believe upon these terms, they must continue infidels.

And that this way of resolving faith into the authority of a visible judge, was not known in the Christian Church even in the Apostles' days (and yet methinks, St. Peter's authority, if he had any such authority, should have been better known in those days, than at such a distance of time), is evident from those early heresies which sprang up in the Church. For let any reasonable man tell me, how it is possible there ever should have been any heresy in the Church, if all Christians had received the authority of an infallible judge, together with their Christianity: men might have renounced Christianity

and the visible judge together ; but had they then acknowledged a visible judge, it had been a contradiction to pretend to the name of Christians, and to oppose the doctrine of the infallible chair. Had there been a visible judge of controversies in the Apostles' days known to all Christians, it had been impossible there should ever have been any heresies in the Church, as those men must grant, who think it necessary there should be such a visible judge, to make all men of a mind, and to prevent the rise and growth of heresies ; which must suppose, that the authority of a visible judge would do this, or else this argument cannot prove the necessity of a visible judge : if then the appointment of a visible judge would certainly prevent all heresies, and yet from the beginnings of Christianity there have been heresies in the Church ; this is a demonstration, there was no visible judge in those days.

Well, but if there be no visible judge of controversies, how shall we arrive at any certainty in our religion ? For the Scriptures are to a demonstration not plain, even in what we dare not disown to be fundamentals, as the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now, 1. Suppose there are some difficult passages in Scripture, which are not obvious to every common understanding ; can we not therefore understand what is plain, because some things are difficult ? Can any thing be plainer than the first and second Commandments, not to give Divine worship to any being but the Supreme God, and not to worship God by images and pictures ? Can anything be plainer, than the institution of the Lord's Supper in both kinds ? than St. Paul's discourse against prayers in an unknown tongue ? Can anything be plainer, than what is evident to our very senses, that bread and wine is not transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ ? Men who will believe, contrary to the plain words of Scripture, contrary to the evidence of sense and reason, which certainly ought to be consulted in expounding Scripture, who would prove that to be in Scripture which is not in it, or that not to be in Scripture which is there, have some reason to complain of the obscurity of Scripture, for the Scriptures were never written to prove what they would have proved ; but yet they may be very plain to men, who only inquire what the Scripture teaches, without forcing such senses upon it as it does not teach : those, who will prove that from Scripture which is not in it, to be sure must prove it very obscurely, and then to excuse the obscurity of their expositions,

charge the Scriptures with obscurity. Though all things are not equally plain in Scripture, yet all men may understand what is plain; and it is a strange perverseness to say nothing is plain in Scripture, because some things are not plain; or that we cannot be certain of the sense of plain texts, because there are some obscure texts.

Secondly, I do affirm, that everything that is necessary to be believed, is plain in Scripture; for else how should we know that we must believe it, or that it is necessary to salvation? But then by plain, I do not mean that it is plain to every man, and at the first sight; but it is plain to men who apply themselves to the study of the Scripture, and have skill and ability to do it; and may be made plain to every man, who has the common understanding of a man, without any bias and interest, who will attend to the instructions of the learned. And this is reason enough to call it plain, if learned men by study and industry can understand it, and if the unlearned may be taught to understand it. Thus mathematical demonstrations are certainly plain, for if a demonstration be not plain, nothing is; but yet it is not every man can understand them without a teacher; but since those who do study mathematics can understand them, and any man of ordinary capacity, who will attend to the instructions of a skilful master, may understand them, we may call them plain, though they are not obvious at the first sight. For this purpose Christ appointed an order of men in his Church, whose business it should be to study the Scriptures themselves, and to teach others, not to impose on their faith by their mere authority, which our Saviour has expressly warned us against, to call no man Master upon earth, and which St. Paul expressly disclaims being lords of their faith; but to open their understandings, and by easy steps to lead them into the true sense of the Scriptures. Thus he taught his disciples himself, as appears from all his sermons; thus the Apostles taught the Christians of their days; and this is the only teaching I know of; for to teach men to believe without understanding, is to teach them to believe they know not what nor why.

But “the doctrine of the Trinity is not plain in Scripture.” An assertion which strikes at the very fundamentals of religion, and justifies all the ancient heresies, which can never be confuted but out of the Scriptures. For, is the doctrine of the Trinity in the Scriptures, or not? If it be not there, how

comes it to be an article of faith ? And if it be not plain in the Scriptures, how can any man tell it is there, when it is not plain that it is there ? The primitive Fathers, who opposed those ancient heretics, wrote great volumes to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from the Scriptures, and therefore, I presume, did think it might be proved from Scripture.

This being a doctrine, which can be known only by revelation ; if it is not plain in Scripture, it is plain no where, and so not the object of our faith, unless they can shew us another revelation besides and above the Scriptures. The only argument the Paper urges to prove the doctrine of the Trinity not to be plain in Scripture, is, that "some denied the Divinity of the Son, some believed the Holy Ghost not to be a separate Person, but only an attribute of God." That is, whatever some men deny, is not plain ; and therefore Christianity itself is not plain, because Jews and Turks and heathens deny it. Is the form of baptism plainly contained in Scripture, to baptize "in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ?" And yet many of the ancient heretics, who corrupted the doctrine of the Trinity, would not use this form, which is as good an argument, that this form is not plain, as that the doctrine of the Trinity is not : and indeed, if one be plain, the other must be, unless we will say, that we are baptized in the name, that is, into the faith and worship of creatures.

The Paper.

"And I think the assembling those Councils we receive as General, shews that their opposers were considerable."

Answer.

How considerable ? for numbers, or interest, or zeal, or authority ? They were inferior upon all these accounts, to the general enemies of the Christian faith, and why should not the number of infidels be as good an argument against Christianity, as the number of heretics against any one article of the Christian faith ? But this is a fatal instance to the Popish, as well as the Protestant resolution of faith, and somewhat worse ; for the Scriptures never complied with heretics ; but the pretended visible judge did, when the Pope of Rome subscribed the Arian confession. But what course did these Nicene Fathers take to confute the heresy of Arius ; did they not allege the authority of the Scriptures for it ? Consult their writings, and see what their reasons are ; and when such a

venerable Council thought the Scriptures clear and plain in this point, is the dissent of heretics a greater argument, that they are not plain, than the determination of such a Council that they are? That this was the constant doctrine of the catholic Church from the time of the Apostles, was a good confirmation that they expounded Scripture right; but had it been possible that there should have been a traditional article of faith, which the Scripture said nothing of, mere unscriptural tradition could be no sufficient foundation of faith, and that for this reason, because we could not be sure what the original of such a tradition was. For the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, give us the most certain account what their faith was, and how ancient soever any other doctrine may be, we have no reason to think it came from the Apostles, if there be nothing of it in the Scriptures.

The Paper.

“And that those good Fathers did not think, after their witnessing out of Scripture and tradition the belief handed down to them from father to son, that the Christians had so much as a liberty of examining after them: since they positively anathematized all those that did not receive their decrees, for which, if they had no authority, the primitive Fathers were the greatest tyrants in the world, to refuse the blessed means of salvation to those, that for ought appeared were as sincere as themselves, and the generality of dissenters made Scripture their rule, as well as we do. This I do not allege, that I know of any truly General Council we reject, but this appears to me, that in the best of times there was thought a power left in the Church without appeal to every man’s reason; and the guides of the Church did not think a man safe, though he to the best of his understanding did expound Scripture, if he did not follow the sense of the Church.”

Answer.

This paragraph is designed to prove, that there is a power in General Councils to determine controversies of faith without appeal to every man’s reason; and that the Fathers assembled in those first Councils did believe they had such a power, that when once they had determined what the true faith was, no man might examine after them. Now whatever the Fathers of the Council believed of themselves, it is plain other men did not believe it. The heretics, whom they condemned, did

not acquiesce in the authority of the Council ; which yet they would certainly have done, had it been the general belief of Christians in that age, that the decrees of General Councils were final and conclusive, to be believed by all men, and to be examined by none : for the most obstinate heretics could never have out-faced such a prejudice as this. After the Council of Nice, the Fathers did appeal to men's private reason, if writing books in justification of the doctrine of the Trinity be such an appeal, as is evident from the writings of Athanasius, Hilary, St. Augustine, and others. Nay, it is strange there should be so many other Councils convened about the Arian controversy after the decision of the Nicene Fathers, if that had put an end to all farther disputes and appeals ; which is a good argument that the Christians did not then think, that the authority of a Council was so sacred, that no man must question it, when succeeding Councils examined, and many times reversed the decrees of former Councils ; nay, that Councils, which were not general, should make bold with the decrees of General Councils, which is but a degree removed from every man's private reason.

But the Council anathematized all those that did not receive their decrees ; and does this prove that they denied all Christians a liberty of examining after them ? Might they not declare such doctrines to be damnable heresies, and reject such men out of their communion, without believing their decrees to be so infallible and sacred, that no man must examine them ? Do not the Protestant Churches do this, without pretending to such an absolute authority over men's faith ? A fallible man, who is certainly assured that any doctrine is a damnable heresy, may declare it to be so ; and if he have any such authority in the Church, he may cast such men out of communion ; and this is all that an anathema signifies ; and all this may be done, and yet men dispute on, and judge for themselves ; and therefore to denounce an anathema, does not prove that he that does it, has such an infallible and uncontrollable authority, as must silence all disputes, and captivate men's reasons and understandings to his dictates.

As for that passage, "that the guides of the Church did not then think a man safe, though he to the best of his understanding did expound Scripture, if he did not follow the sense of the Church," it has something of truth, but a great deal of sophistry in it. It is so far true, that a man who embraces damnable errors is not safe, how firmly soever he

be persuaded to the truth of them, and that it is very hazardous to contradict the sense, not of any Council, which may be a packed conventicle of heretics, nor of any particular age of the Church, which may be very ignorant, or very corrupt, but of the universal Church in all places and ages; but in this sense it is nothing to the present purpose: and if the meaning be, as it seems to be, that it is dangerous for a man to use his own reason and judgment in opposition to the decrees of Councils, it may sometimes be so, and sometimes not, as the Council is; and whatever the event be, every man must judge of that: it may prove dangerous to a man to use his reason, if he do not use it right; but yet there is no help for it, but every man must use his reason, or act like a fool.

But possibly it will be asked, What authority then do we allow to Councils? and I shall very freely speak my mind of it. 1. In cases that are doubtful, the judgment of so many wise and learned and pious men, from all parts of the Christian Church, is a very probable argument of the truth of their decrees; and no modest man will openly oppose what they determine, unless it appears that there was something of faction and interest at the bottom; or that the reasons whereby they were over-ruled, were so weak or ludicrous as to render their judgments contemptible: for if the opinion of one learned man be so considerable, much more is the deliberate judgment of so many great and good men. Secondly, the authority of ancient Councils is very considerable, as they were credible witnesses of the Apostles' doctrine and practice, and the constant faith of the Church in the preceding ages; which is a mighty satisfaction, to find by these venerable records, that what we now believe, was the faith of the Church in the best and purest ages; before it was divided by schisms and factions, or corrupted with ease and liberty, or wanton disputes. Thirdly, General or National Councils have authority to determine what doctrines shall be publicly professed and taught in their Churches, and be made the articles of Church communion, as it must necessarily be, if there be any authority in the Church. For it is fit that the faith of the Church should be one, and those who have the government of the Church, must have the care of the faith. But then this authority does not oblige any man to believe as the Church believes, and to receive all such decrees without examination; but only if we will live in communion with such a Church, we must own the faith of that Church, for she will allow none to

communicate with her, who do not. Now if the faith and worship of such a Church be pure and orthodox, the Church is in the right in requiring obedience and conformity to her decrees and constitutions, and those who refuse it, must answer it both to God and men ; if her faith be corrupt, she abuses her power in imposing it on Christians, and no man is bound to believe what is false, because the Church defines it to be true. If you ask whose judgment ought to take place, the judgment of the Church, or of every private Christian ? I answer, the judgment of the Church of necessity must take place as to external government, to determine what shall be professed and practised in her communion ; and no private Christian has any thing to do in these matters ; but when the question is, what is right or wrong, true or false, in what we may obey, and in what not ? Here every private Christian, who will not believe without understanding, nor follow his guides blindfold, must judge for himself, and it is as much as his soul is worth to judge right : for if he reject the faith and the communion of the Church, without a just and necessary cause, he is a heretic and a schismatic, liable to the censures of the Church in this world, and to the vengeance of God in the next. If he reject an erroneous and corrupt communion, he incurs the censures of the Church, which in most Christian kingdoms are attended with some temporal inconveniences ; and if he embrace it, he is in danger of a future judgment, for “ if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.” These are the proper limits of all human authority, both in Church and state : below this there is no authority, and above it, it is not human authority ; for a blind obedience can be due to none but God, and he himself seldom exacts it. If we will grant governors and subjects to be men, who have the use of their own reason and judgment, it is impossible to state the case of authority and subjection otherwise than thus : That the faith and judgment of governors, influences and directs their government, and gives laws of faith and manners to subjects ; and the private judgments of subjects direct them how far they are to believe and obey their governors, and God himself judges between them, and by his providence prevents or overrules all those disorders which may happen either in Church or state in this world, and rewards or punishes both governors and subjects according to their deserts in the next. And this supersedes all farther disputes about some hard cases, or the sincerity or insincerity of governors or subjects ; for every man

must of necessity judge for himself, and God will govern and judge us all ; which there could be no pretence for, if we had not the free exercise of our reason in the government of ourselves.

The Paper.

“ But I know it is urged, the Church of England is guided by Antiquity for the interpretation of Scripture ; but every one knows that there is great difficulty in that too, even for scholars, at least I am told so ; for no Church admits of all that is ancient, for several heresies are so ; and since we say, number makes nothing for truth, and that all men may err, and that there is no certain mark by visible succession to find out which are true believers, in this confusion the Church of England must be very fortunate, not to retain too much, as the Arians and Macedonians, &c. say we do ; or too little, as the Romanists say.”

Answer.

The Church of England, indeed, has regard to the doctrine of the Primitive Church in expounding Scripture, not that she fetches all her expositions from ancient writers, but that she takes care not to expound Scripture in contradiction to the ancient faith of the Church contained in the ancient Creeds ; and it requires no great skill in antiquity to know what this faith is, which we repeat every day in the Apostles’ Creed ; and this is a good argument that we expound Scripture right, when the sense we give of it, is what the words and reason of the text import, and agrees with the faith of the first and purest ages of the Church. Had we no ancient records, we could find out the true sense of Scripture in all necessary points of faith ; but the traditional doctrine of the Church, where the tradition is plain and clear, and therefore easy to be known, is a great confirmation of those interpretations we give of Scripture in conformity to the ancient belief, and confutes all the evasions and criticisms of heretics. For when the words of Scripture may with some art be expounded to different senses, either to justify some new or ancient heresies, or the catholic faith, we need not doubt but that is the true sense, which agrees with the uniform belief of the primitive Church, who were the best judges what the faith of the Apostles was, by whom the Scriptures were written ; and though there were indeed very ancient heresies, yet nothing is plainer in ecclesiastical history, than the distinction between those ancient

heresies and the catholic faith, and therefore scholars cannot easily mistake them ; and as for those who are unlearned, that short and ancient summary of the catholic faith, contained in the Apostles' Creed, and expounded by the Nicene Fathers in their Creed, which is in every body's hands, and part of our daily or weekly service, is security enough against all fundamental mistakes.

The Christians of the Church of England have a very plain and easy resolution of their faith. As for the positive articles of faith, we have the ancient Creeds, which have been received in all ages of the Christian Church from the times of the Apostles, and which the most perverse heretics cannot deny to have been the catholic faith ; and yet we do not believe these merely upon the authority of tradition, but because we find all these doctrines plainly taught in Scripture ; and for this the meanest Christian need not depend wholly upon the authority of his guides, but has liberty to examine their exposition, and the reasons of them, which are so plain and convincing in the great and fundamental articles of our faith, that an honest man, who meets with a skilful guide, may satisfy himself about it, and see with his own eyes.

Now what greater assurance can we have in this case, than the harmony and consent of Scripture and tradition, which confirm and justify each other ? The Apostles, no doubt, preached and wrote the same things, and it is a good argument, That is an uncorrupt tradition which agrees with the doctrine of the Scripture, and that that is a true exposition of Scripture which agrees with the ancient formularies of faith, delivered down to us by an unquestionable tradition from the first ages of the Church.

As for negative articles, about which is our only controversy with the Church of Rome, since nothing can be an article of faith, but what Christ or his Apostles have taught, we think it sufficient to reject all such doctrines, as are not plainly and expressly taught in Scripture, and this the meanest Christian, with the help of a guide, may understand. For [as in reason it must be, when men will prove that to be in the Scripture which is not], the Scripture proofs which are urged by the most learned doctors of the Roman communion, for their peculiar doctrines, which we reject, are so apparently unconvincing, that it requires very little skill to confute them. And though this were reason enough of itself to reject any doctrine which arrogates the authority and necessity of an article of

faith, that the Scripture does not teach it, yet in most cases, we can shew, and that to the conviction of the meanest understanding, which is honest and unprejudiced, that such doctrines are either in express words, or by plain and necessary consequence, rejected and condemned in Scripture, which is somewhat more than not to be taught there ; because it is certain no Church can have authority to teach what the Scripture condemns.

And then as for authority, we appeal to the best authority of the Christian Church, the three first ages after the Apostles, who are the most credible witnesses (which is all the authority they can have) of the Apostolic doctrine and practice, and can plainly prove from those venerable records, that the doctrines and practices in dispute between us and the Church of Rome, were either never taught, or actually condemned by those primitive Fathers. And though in other cases it is a hard thing to prove a negative, it is not so here, because the proof lies all on the positive side. For those, who will teach such doctrines and practices, ought to prove them, for without such a proof they are to be rejected of course ; and therefore if we can confute their proofs, we need do no more ; and this is a very easy task, especially with reference to the first three centuries : for since they themselves are now ashamed of the counterfeit Dionysius, their Decretal Epistles, and such like spurious writings, the wisest of them pretend to very few testimonies from the first writers, and those which they do allege, are such lame ones, as need very little confutation.

These are the Protestant grounds of faith, as it is professed in the Church of England, and there is but one material objection against the certainty of this way. That our dissenters pretend to Scripture as well as we, and so most heretics have always done ; and as for antiquity, the Church of Rome makes a greater noise with it than we do, and how then can a plain and unlearned man choose safely in such variety of judgments and opinions ?

Now the force of this argument consists in this, that because some men mistake, no man can be in the right ; or because some men may confidently believe they are in the right, when they are in the wrong, therefore no man can be sure that he is in the right : which pretence would be laughed at in all other cases, excepting religion, and here I am sure it deserves to be so. There is a vast difference between confidence of persuasion, and certainty of knowledge ; the prejudices of education, the authority of guides, the bias of interest, and such

like fallacious principles may make men very confident, when they know little or nothing about the matter, or men may reason falsely, and think themselves very confident, as a man in a dream does; but can no man be certain he is awake, because some men very confidently think themselves awake, when they are in a dream? The greatest part of the world pronounce a hasty judgment, before they are well awake, before they have considered the matter thoroughly, and weighed every circumstance of it, and a man who has but half considered a thing, may with very good reason think himself certain so far, and yet may be grossly mistaken, because there is another half which he has not considered. Every man is sensible of this when he corrects a mistake, for he discovers something which he had not thought on before, which makes him alter his judgment about it; and therefore though some men are confident and yet mistaken, it does not hence follow, that no man can be certain when he reasons right; for truth lies so easy in a man's mind, who has thoroughly considered things, and has such a native brightness and lustre in it, that he can no more doubt of it, than whether the sun be up when he sees its light.

But let us consider this objection particularly, with reference both to Scripture and antiquity.

1. It is objected, That heretics pretended the authority of Scripture, as well as the orthodox, and our dissenters, as well as the Church of England. But what then? Is the Scripture of no use, because some men use it ill? Is it not possible to find out the true sense of Scripture, because some men put a false sense on it? Can these heretics be confuted out of the Scripture, or not? If not, why do we charge them with heresy? If they may, how are such heresies, being fathered on the Scriptures, an argument against studying the Scriptures, and relying on their authority? For we cannot confute heresies by the Scripture, unless we can understand the Scriptures; and if we may find out the true sense of Scripture, notwithstanding that heretics put a wrong sense on it, then we may be as certain, that we understand the Scriptures aright, as we are that others do misunderstand them. But besides this: though heretics pretend to expound Scripture, yet they contradict the faith of the primitive Church, and therefore their case differs vastly from the case of the Church of England, whose faith is founded both on Scripture and Apostolic tradition, as I observed before. And as for our dissenters, our dispute with them is

not about articles of faith, but the external modes and circumstances of worship, or the government and discipline of the Church; and the question between us is, Whether we must use no external circumstances of worship, but what are prescribed in Scripture; or, Whether the constant practice of the Church from the days of the Apostles, be not the best comment on Scripture, as to the external government of it? And this, I think, is so baffled a cause, that the Romanists are hard put to it when they use that argument.

Secondly, As for antiquity, the Church of Rome makes great boasts of it, but they are very vain ones; and who can help men's pretending to antiquity, when it is apparently against them? No man, indeed, can be a competent judge of this, but those who are skilled in antiquity, and have examined their pretences; but there are some considerations which lie obvious to every man, and may serve to direct the unlearned what judgment to make in this matter.

1. For had true antiquity been on their side, what need had they of spurious and counterfeit authors to make some appearance of antiquity with? This has been the great artifice of the Church of Rome, though they begin now to be ashamed of it, since the learned Reformers have discovered the cheat. Who pleases may see some account of this in an English book, intituled "Roman Forgeries;" and this is reason enough to suspect their pretences to antiquity; for no man takes sanctuary in falsehood, who has truth on his side.

2. Another evidence of this, is their corrupting ancient authors, and because they can find nothing in them to their purpose, to insert something which is: but the plainest and honestest confession of this matter, is their *Index Expurgatorius*, which corrects the Fathers, and orders the leaving out of such passages as make against them; now when they are forced to leave out and put into the Fathers, it is very suspicious that they are convinced the Fathers are not on their side.

3. Where they make the loudest cry of antiquity, the Scripture is either against them, or says nothing for them; and though we allow the ancient practice of the Church in matters of discipline and government, to be a good pattern for us to follow in such particulars as are not expressed in Scripture, if they comply with the general rules and directions of Scripture; yet we do not think antiquity itself to be a sufficient justification of any doctrines of faith, or new acts of worship,

which either the Scripture condemns, or does not teach ; and this is a manifest difference between the pretences of the Church of England, and the Church of Rome, to antiquity. The Church of England justifies her doctrines and practices, both from Scripture and antiquity, which is as sure a foundation as we can possibly have : the Church of Rome alleges antiquity (such as it is) to prove such doctrines and practices, as the Scripture either condemns, or knows nothing of. Now we think the Scriptures have the greatest antiquity, and are a perfect rule of faith and manners, and that no other antiquity can control the authority of the Scriptures. As for instance : Suppose the Church of Rome could prove the worship of images, praying to saints and angels, prayers in an unknown tongue, and communion in one kind, &c. to have been anciently practised in the Church (though this they are never able to prove), yet what is this to the purpose, when the Scripture expressly condemns the worship of images, and giving religious worship to any other being but to God only, and, by their own confession, says nothing of the worship of saints ; and that St. Paul disputes designedly against prayers in an unknown tongue ; and that our Saviour instituted his Supper in both kinds, and commanded them to drink of the consecrated cup, as well as to eat the bread. Though I have a great reverence for antiquity, yet if St. Paul, in his days, pronounced an anathema against angels themselves, who should preach any other Gospel, we may safely renounce the authority of any Church, that shall contradict the express commands and institutions of Christ.

To conclude this argument : Were antiquity our only guide and rule in matters of faith and worship, I readily grant it would be a very uncertain rule, and such as neither the learned nor the unlearned could build their faith on ; for there have been great variety of opinions and practices in other ages of the Church, especially since the fourth century (from which the Church of Rome principally date their antiquity), as well as in our own ; which shews what an uncertain foundation the Church of Rome has for her faith, as for all those doctrines and practices wherein she differs from us, which have no foundation in Scripture, and at best a very uncertain one in very late antiquity : but this does not concern us, who prefer Scripture-antiquity before all other, and own no antiquity in contradiction to the Scripture, which is the rule and foundation of our faith ; and by this we know, that we neither retain

too much nor too little, because we teach neither more nor less than what the Scripture teaches.

The Paper.

“ But it is replied, The Church of England gives leave even to women to examine the truth of what they teach ; but certainly this is a compliment, they being incapable of examination, neither indeed are statesmen, lawyers, the busy, nor the stupidly ignorant. For if we will be judges ourselves of these matters, what life or capacity is sufficient ? For in justice, if I examine, I ought to hear all the several pretenders to the interpretation of Scripture, who make it their rule of faith, so to examine those texts that make against us, as well as those for us, and the several expositors. For in affairs of much less importance, people are thought foolish and partial, let one party tell his story to a seeming demonstration, not to preserve another ear for the other side, before he determines, if he must judge at all.”

Answer.

The lightness of this expression of complimenting, does not savour of a serious mind in matters of such vast importance. Did our Saviour then compliment his hearers, when he commanded them to search the Scriptures ; for he had women, and very busy people who heard his sermons ? The poor and the ignorant, and the despised people, publicans and sinners, received the Gospel, which does not so much require great leisure and capacity for study, as an honest teachable mind ; and I confess, I think it a great reproach to the Gospel of our Saviour to make it so much an art and a mystery, that none but great scholars can understand it. Scholars, indeed, have made an art, and a mere disputing art of it ; and heretics, who have corrupted the Gospel, have endeavoured by perverse comments to make plain places obscure ; and the Church of Rome has more countenanced this pretence, than any other Church in the world, to frighten people from reading that book, which is the most dangerous book that ever was written against Popery. And after all their talk of the obscurity of Scripture, their denying people the free use of it, is a plain confession, that they think it too plain against themselves, so plain that every ordinary Christian would be able to see it.

But if so very few people are able to judge of the disputes in religion, what course shall women and other persons, whom

the Paper makes such incompetent judges, take? Suppose they have been educated in the communion of the Church of England, and are now assaulted by Popish priests to go over to the Church of Rome, must they make this change with reason, or without it? Must they judge for themselves, or forsake one Church and choose another without judgment? or can women, or busy, or ignorant people, more easily find out the true Church and the infallible judge, than they can read in Scripture, that they must worship none but God; that they must not worship images and pictures; that they must pray to God in a known tongue, and celebrate the Supper of our Lord by drinking of the cup, as well as by eating the bread? Whoever ventures to forsake the communion of a Church, wherein he was baptized and educated, I am sure ought to be able to judge, whether he be or no; and those who confess they are not able to judge, ought to keep where they are; for it is safer to continue in a Church without judgment, than to forsake it without reason and judgment. In the first case, the providence of God in our birth and education will make some apology for our involuntary mistakes; but if we wantonly leave one Church and go to another, without being able to judge of either, the act is wholly our own choice, and if we leave a better for a worse, we must take what follows; and therefore this is the most improper argument in the world, to be used by one, who is wavering between two Churches; for if he must not use his own private judgment, I cannot guess how he should either choose or refuse. Those who challenge a liberty of judging for themselves, which is the undoubted right of all reasonable creatures, may change as they see reason, and at their own peril if they choose wrong; but those who disclaim all right and capacity of judging, must continue as they are, and take their chance, for they may as well choose their faith as their guide, whom they will in all things believe.

But still the force of the objection is not answered, that he who will judge, must judge upon the whole matter, and therefore must know and be able to answer whatever is said to the contrary, which the greatest number of men, as well as women, are not able to do; but if this be true, the greatest number of men as well as women, must never believe there is a God, or that Christ came from God to declare his will to the world, for there are very few of them that ever heard, or are able to answer the tenth part of the arguments of atheists and infidels against

the being of a God and the Christian religion ; and yet it is ridiculous to talk of authority, or a judge of controversies in these matters, for we must first believe there is a God, and that Christ came from God, before we can believe that they have appointed a judge of controversies. So that we must either say, that common people, who have not time nor abilities to understand and answer all the objections which are made against the existence of a God, can have no good reason to believe there is a God ; or we must grant that men may have sufficient reason to believe some things, without being able to answer all possible objections which are made against them.

The plain account of this matter is this : that there is such a degree of evidence, arguments so plain and clear and convincing, that the mind may safely acquiesce in them, without examining or answering all possible objections which may be started. Every man finds this in himself, there are many things which he can never be made to doubt of, though it may be he has but one plain argument to prove them : though the philosopher disputed very subtilly against the possibility of motion, he could persuade none of his scholars that motion was impossible, because they saw themselves and everything else move every day, which was a sufficient confutation of all the arguments that can be brought against motion. If I have any one unanswerable argument to prove that a thing is, or that it is not, this is a sufficient foundation for my faith, though I cannot answer all objections against it : for there are no objections of any force against a plain and positive proof, but such as weaken the proof itself, and they indeed must be considered, but all other collateral difficulties may be rejected, for if I can prove that a thing is, no other difficulties about the nature, notion, or operations of such a being can prove that it is not. As for instance : we have a great many positive proofs that there is a God, especially from the visible effects of his power and wisdom in making the world ; now if this be a good argument, and nothing can be said against it, which can move a considering man, then we may firmly believe there is a God, though there may be a great many difficulties objected against the notion of a God, what he is, and how he made the world, &c. which do not prove that there is no God, but that we do not perfectly comprehend him. And yet this is generally the case, that where there is one plain and evident proof for or against anything, there is no plain and evident proof on the other side, for then indeed we should be in a hard case,

could there be plain and positive proofs for both sides of the question. It will be of use to shew this more particularly, how men of very ordinary abilities may arrive to a very great certainty in religion, without being able to dispute the point, or to answer all possible objections, and the best way to explain this to the meanest understanding is to give some particular instances of it.

It is a great dispute between us and the Church of Rome, whether the sacramental bread and wine be transubstantiated into the natural flesh and blood of Christ, which, I think, a plain man, who will believe his senses, may determine without disputing, for he has the best evidence that he possibly can have for anything, that the consecrated bread and wine is still bread and wine, not flesh and blood, for all his senses tell him so, and he who will suffer himself to be reasoned out of his senses, deserves to be deceived ; and very absurdly complains of want of evidence and certainty, when he rejects the most certain evidence that God can give him. In matters of sense the testimony of our senses is certainly the best evidence, and every man, who has his eyes in his head, can see whether it be bread and wine or not, and therefore this alone is sufficient to create certainty in defiance of all objections to the contrary.

Thus the second Commandment, which forbids the worship of all images, without any restriction or qualification, is a plain and express proof against image worship, for whatever apologies may be made for the worship of images, here is an express law against it, in such plain terms, as require great art and sophistry to evade them, but no art to understand them. Now there being a positive law against the worship of images, and no law either in the Old or New Testament to give the least allowance to any kind of image worship, any man who will believe according to evidence, must condemn image worship, whatever other unscriptural arguments or authorities may be alleged for it : and I know no need there is of any dispute in the case, if men will be determined by a divine law.

Thus if there be a supreme infallible Head of the Church, he must be appointed by Christ, and that in such plain words, that every body may know who he is, and what his authority is ; but Christ has done no such thing, and therefore there is none ; and this alone is evidence enough to satisfy the meanest man in this matter without disputing. For if Christ hath appointed no supreme infallible judge, I am sure all the arguments in the world cannot make one : this is so plain and

evident, that a man who will be convinced by reason, cannot resist it, for though no pretence of usefulness or necessity can prove that there is such a judge, yet that Christ has appointed no such judge, evidently proves that there is none, for he cannot be, unless he is evidently appointed by Christ; and yet he is not evidently appointed, unless it be in such plain words as admit of no reasonable dispute. So that this whole controversy about the supreme head of the Church, and an infallible judge, issues in this one point, whether Christ hath appointed such a head and judge? And there is but one way to prove it, *viz.* by shewing where and when Christ has done this; and this the meanest man, without disputing, may judge of, for if no such thing plainly appear, the want of evidence for it is all the evidence we need to have against it.

And thus it is in most of the disputes between us and the Church of Rome, especially where the people are most concerned, they are reduced to this one plain question, whether any such thing was instituted by Christ? Because without such an institution they can have no virtue in them; and whether they be instituted or not, the most unlearned man, who can read the Bible, at least with the help of a guide, may satisfy himself. As for instance, whether the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead? Whether the laity are not as much bound to drink of the sacramental cup as to eat of the bread? Whether it be lawful to pray to saints departed, and to make them our advocates and intercessors with God? Whether we must pray to God in a language which we do or do not understand? &c. I say nothing can justify these things but an institution; and when no such institution appears, it is a vain thing to attempt any other way to prove the lawfulness or usefulness of them, especially, if besides the want of such a positive institution, we have plain evidence against them, and such as every man may understand. When the Scripture tells us, that Christ has "by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. ix. 25, 26, and x. 14, this is a direct proof against the sacrifice of the mass, wherein he is offered ten thousand times every day. When Christ is the priest as well as the sacrifice, and can be offered by none but himself, how comes he to be offered by a mass-priest, unless he, as well as the bread and wine, be transubstantiated into Christ? It is certain, there can be no such thing as the Popish sacrifice of the mass, unless the bread and wine be transubstantiated into

the body and blood of Christ, and we are as certain as our senses can make us, that there is no transubstantiation.

As for the half communion, it is confessed that Christ did institute his last Supper in both kinds, and commanded them all to drink of the cup: and this may satisfy any man, who does not believe that the Church of Rome has authority to repeal the institutions of Christ, and to forbid what he commanded.

And when St. Paul assures us, that "there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus," one would think this evidence enough against the mediation of saints and angels, when they cannot shew one word for it. For as for their distinction between mediators of redemption and pure intercession, they cannot shew it in Scripture, where our Redeemer is our only advocate: and when Christ himself enforces and ratifies that command of the law, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;" this is a plain argument against the invocation of saints, since they have nothing for it. And when there is no authority in Scripture for praying in an unknown tongue, one would think that the absurdity of the practice, and the authority of St. Paul, who expressly condemns it, were evidence enough against it.

So that though men may be at the needless expense of a great deal of learning in these controversies, yet in truth there is no learning required to understand them, the meanest man may judge for himself, for the controversy turns upon so plain a point, and there is so plain evidence in the case, that an honest man may have abundant evidence and satisfaction, though he do not understand one word of all the learning which is lost in such disputes.

The Paper.

"In short, I think there is but evidence or authority to move us to believe."

Answer.

This is certainly true, if it be rightly understood; that is, if by evidence is meant the evidence of sense and reason, and by authority the authority of Scripture, which is the authority of God, who spake by Moses and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and by Christ and his Apostles in the New, and the authority of the primitive Church, as credible

witnesses of the Apostolic doctrine and practice ; in this sense we grant that our faith must be founded both upon evidence and authority, and this is the true Protestant resolution of faith ; and then the only fault of this proposition is, that evidence and authority are opposed to each other, whereas they must always go together in a true rational faith. But if by evidence be meant all the arguments whereby we can prove the truth of any thing, whether from sense or reason, or Scripture, or the testimony of antiquity ; and by authority be meant the authority of a visible judge of controversies, as it is understood in this Paper, then at best this is a very precarious proposition, without the least shadow of truth, that either evidence or authority must move us to believe ; that is, that our faith must be resolved either into evidence, or the authority of a visible judge. For how is this proved, that when there wants evidence for our faith, we must believe upon the authority of a visible judge ? It seems to me a more natural consequence, that where there wants evidence, we must not believe at all. If it had been first proved, that God had appointed a visible judge to direct those who cannot judge for themselves, there had been some pretence for saying, that we must believe either upon evidence, or upon the authority of a judge ; but without proving this first, I would desire any man to prove to me, that I am bound to believe what I have no evidence for, or which is all one, no such evidence as I can understand ; and if I be not bound to believe without evidence, how can the want of evidence prove that there must be a visible judge, into whose authority I must resolve my faith ?

The Paper.

“ Evidence to the generality of people is impossible.”

Answer.

But I have already proved that this is not impossible, but the meanest man, with the help of a learned and faithful guide, may understand the Scriptures in all things necessary for a Christian to know. But suppose, at present, that the generality of people cannot do this, yet can learned men do it. And one would think, if there be any evidence, at least learned men may understand it ; for that which is not evident, neither to the learned nor to the unlearned, I fear, is no evidence at all ; unless there be such a kind of evidence, as is evident to nobody ; and yet the Church of Rome has brought things to a fine pass,

if she must be forced to deny, that we have any evidence for our religion.

Now if there be any evidence for our religion, and learned men may understand it, then at least learned men may judge for themselves, and not depend upon the authority of any other judge ; and thus there is no need, nay, there can be no use of a visible judge for the learned part of the world ; for to say that learned men have evidence to ground their faith on, and yet must not believe according to evidence, but authority, is to say that men have eyes, but must not use them to see their own way, but must follow a guide blindfold. And yet if learned men be allowed to see, and judge for themselves, a judge of controversies will signify very little ; for it is learned men who start difficulties and manage disputes, and are the authors and patrons of heresies ; and if these learned men, who may and must judge for themselves, differ from each other, and from the judge of controversies, what remedy is there ? Nay, if learned men must judge for themselves according to the evidence they have of things, and not be over-ruled by authority without evidence, there can be no visible judge of controversies ; for an authority, which may be contradicted (as it may be, if learned men must judge for themselves) can be no authority either with the learned or unlearned ; for the unlearned will have no great reverence for that authority which the learned may contradict. And therefore, whoever will have a judge of controversies, must not lay the necessity of having such a judge merely upon the ignorance of the multitude, for this does not prove that learned men must have such a judge ; nay, it proves that learned men need no such judge, if ignorance only make him necessary ; and if there be not a judge for learned men, there can be no judge of controversies ; for there are more disputes among the learned than the ignorant. The ignorance of the people is only made a pretence to deceive ignorant people, but is no good reason for a visible judge ; for there can be no visible judge, unless he judge for the learned as well as the unlearned ; and if learned men must not judge for themselves, it is then a ridiculous thing to talk of any other evidence than the authority of the judge ; for what does evidence signify, if no man must use it ? Nay, upon these principles it is a ridiculous thing to distinguish between learned and unlearned men in matters of religion. To what purpose is it to read and study the Scriptures, Fathers, and Councils, when they must not exercise their own reason or judgment

about them? What privilege have the learned above the unlearned, when they must know and believe no more than their judge will let them?

The Paper.

“And we are discouraged from the quiet way of submission to the clergy’s authority, by your telling us, that no assembly of men have power on earth to bind the conscience.”

Answer.

How comes submission to the clergy’s authority in here? For is every priest the judge into whose authority we must resolve our faith? This, indeed, is the last resolution of faith in the Church of Rome, for the priest is the immediate guide of every man’s faith and conscience; and after all the talk of a visible judge, the people know nothing more what he teaches, than what their priest tells them, who it may be himself knows little of the matter. And I cannot see what greater security this gives the people of the Roman communion, than what our people have, who have generally as wise and learned and honest guides as they, to say nothing more.

But who ever said, that no assembly of men have power on earth to bind the conscience? We do acknowledge that the Church has power to make laws to bind the conscience; for whatever laws she makes for the edification and good government of Christian people, which contradict no law of God, and are agreeable to the general rules of the Gospel, do bind the conscience. Nay, in matters of faith, the authority of the Church is so sacred, that all Christians are bound in conscience quietly to submit to her decisions, where there is not plain evidence against them: but we say, indeed, that no man, nor assembly of men, have such authority as to oblige us to believe all their dictates and decrees without examination, much less contrary to the evidence of sense, reason, and Scripture, and the judgment and practice of the first ages of the Church, and therefore we do not require that men should believe merely upon the authority of their teachers, without understanding why they do so. But this, I hope, is no discouragement to any men to submit to the instructions of their guides, and to learn from them what they are to believe, and why; and this will make them wiser men, and more understanding Christians, than to rely wholly on their authority.

The Paper.

“ For authority, that of the Church of Rome is infinitely greater, who, it is to be feared, at least has an appearance of succession and visibility, and who pretends, that God has left in that Church such means, so happy and so easy to attain to the certainty of the truth, that our very divines wish, in this confusion of things, God had so ordered it for certainty and union.”

Answer.

This is a strange paragraph, that only a fear of an appearance of succession and visibility, and her own pretence that God has made her the visible judge of controversies, should render the authority of the Church of Rome infinitely greater than of any other Church, which are very little things to give so great an authority.

But we will readily grant, that the Church of Rome has been a visible Church in a constant succession of bishops and pastors, from the Apostles' days till now. What then? How does this give her a greater authority than other Churches, which have as visible a succession as she? The Greek Church has been a visible Church, and preserved her succession from the Apostles till now; the Church of England is as visible, and has as good a succession as the Church of Rome; how then does succession and visibility give the Church of Rome a greater authority than the Greek Church, or the Church of England?

It is a mighty weak foundation for the authority of a judge of controversies (which is the matter in question), that such a Church has a visible succession from the Apostles. A judge of controversies, who shall oblige all men to believe his determinations, must be infallible; unless we will say, that God has obliged us, without examination, to believe a judge who may err, which cannot be, unless we can suppose that God may oblige us to believe a lie, for thus it may happen, if we are always obliged to believe a judge, who may sometimes err, as all fallible creatures may: which shews what a poor shift it is which some late writers have used (and which this Paper, which speaks not one word of infallibility, seems to intimate), to set aside the dispute about the infallibility of the Church, which they can make nothing of, and to insist only on the authority of the Church to determine controversies, as a visible

judge; for that only obliges men either to renounce the communion of such a Church, or to submit to her determination, not at all adventures to believe as the Church believes, as shewed before; and therefore this does not concern the dispute about the resolution of faith.

Now if the judge of controversies must be infallible, how does a visible succession from the Apostles prove any Church to be infallible? This is no natural effect, as the Romanist themselves grant; for then the successors in all the Apostolical chairs must be infallible, since all the Apostles were as infallible as St. Peter; whereas they will allow this only to the chair of St. Peter, as a peculiar prerogative granted to him by Christ; so that it is not succession or visibility which prove the Church of Rome to be the infallible judge of controversies, which is the thing this Paper insists on; but they must return to the good old arguments of *Tu es Petrus, et pasce Ove*, which I perceive the author of this Paper was ashamed of; and therefore I shall not take a needless trouble to confute them.

If indeed they could prove a visible succession of doctrine and worship, as well as bishops, from the Apostles, that they believed and practised neither more nor less through all the several ages of the Church to this day, than what St. Peter taught them, though this would not make them the judge of controversies, yet they would be good witnesses of the Apostolical faith, and there would be great reason to inquire, what their faith and worship is: but their mere succession to the Apostles does not prove that they have neither diminished nor added to the faith of the Apostles; for there is no natural necessity that those who succeed should always be in the mind of their predecessors; and we have plain evidence that the Church of Rome has in several ages made new and strange additions to the Christian faith, and their succession of bishops without a succession of faith and worship, is little worth.

And yet it is much stranger still, that the Church of Rome's pretence to authority of a judge, should be made reason to believe that she has this authority. What advantage has confidence above modesty over weak minds! The Church of England might pretend this with as much reason as the Church of Rome, but she disowning infallibility loses all claim to it; and the Church of Rome pretending to infallibility, seems, gains a right to it by possession and usurpation.

But the argument, such as it is, seems to be this, that the

divines of the Church of England wish in this confusion of things, that there were a judge of controversies, and therefore by their own confession, a judge is very useful and necessary, and therefore there is such a judge, and no other Church pretending to that authority but the Church of Rome, therefore she alone is that judge: which is such a chain of consequences, as hang together by magic, for they have no natural connexion. If we did think a judge of controversies useful, does it hence follow that God has appointed such a judge, when there is no appearance of any such thing? Or if God had appointed such a judge, does the Church of Rome's pretending to be that judge, when she can shew no commission for it, prove that she is so?

But the truth is, whatever divines there be (if there be any such) who wish for such a judge to unite the whole Christian Church in faith and worship, they take very wrong measures of things. And because the true understanding of this is the most effectual way to end this controversy, I shall discourse particularly of it.

1. First then, I observe, than an infallible judge of controversies, whom we are bound in all cases to believe, is inconsistent with the constitution of human nature. Man is a reasonable creature, and it is natural to a reasonable creature to understand and judge for himself; and therefore to submit to any man's judgment, how infallible soever he be presumed to be, without understanding and judging for ourselves, is an unnatural imposition upon mankind; this destroys human nature, and transforms a man, who is a knowing and intelligent creature, into a senseless, though infallible machine, which moves by external direction, not from an inward principle of knowledge and life. To know, and to follow a guide without any knowledge or judgment of our own, are two very different things, the first is the understanding of a man, the other a sort of knowledge without understanding. For though I had an entire system of true propositions, which I must exercise no act of reason and judgment about, but only receive them as the dictates of an infallible judge; this is not human knowledge, this is no perfection of human understanding; no man is a jot the wiser or more knowing for all this, no more than he would be who could repeat all the propositions in Euclid, and believe them to be all true upon the authority of his master, but knows not how to demonstrate any one of them, which is to understand nothing about them. Now I

can never believe, that God will destroy human nature, by suspending all the acts of reason and judgment, to make me infallible; which is a certain way indeed to prevent error, to let men know and judge of nothing, that they may not mistake; but for my part, I value knowledge so much, that I had rather venture some mistakes than forfeit my understanding. If my faith must be resolved wholly into the authority of an infallible judge, though I may think I understand somethings, yet I must not believe for that reason, for then I must believe nothing but what I do understand and see a reason for which makes every man his own judge; but I must believe my judge with or without understanding, without the exercise of my own reason and judgment, which may make us good Catholics, but does also unman us.

But you will say, Are we not bound to believe infallible teachers, whom we know to be infallible? And has not God in several ages given such teachers to the world, Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles? And must we not resign up our understandings to them? And does this unman us? Why then may we not resign up our understandings to an infallible judge now, as we ought to have done had we lived in the days of Christ and his Apostles, and any other infallible teachers? Now for answer to this, consider,

Secondly, That no infallible teacher can wholly supersede the exercise of our own reason and judgment. For though the immediate authority of God must and ought in all cases to over-rule us, and is the best and most rational account of our faith; for nothing is more reasonable than to believe God who is eternal Truth: yet when any man pretends to teach by God's authority, we must in the first place judge of his authority, and not believe every one who pretends to come from God; which resolves the very reason of our faith into our own private judgment; and therefore by this rule we must at least use our own judgment in the choice of our judge, which in our present case will infer the use of our own reason and judgment as to all the material disputes in religion, and make such a judge needless, when we have found him: or which more presently.

Nay, secondly, we must judge of the doctrine of such teacher by sense and reason, which are the natural principle of knowledge; for let a man pretend never so much to Divine authority, if he preach anything contrary to the sense and reason of mankind, we are not to believe him, no no

though he should work miracles. For we must believe nothing comes from God which is contrary to sense and reason, which are the natural notices God has given us of things ; and as God cannot contradict himself, so we can never be surer that any man speaks from God, than we are of what sense and reason teaches ; and if the Church of Rome would but suffer us to judge thus far, we should have an infallible demonstration against her infallibility. However, this shews, that the most infallible teacher cannot destroy our natural liberty of judging, for we must judge of his doctrine by sense and reason, and see that it contradict neither ; which are the only natural principles of knowledge we have ; which is therefore to exercise all the reason and judgment which God has given us.

And, thirdly, Though we must receive all divine and supernatural truths upon the authority of the revealer, yet we must use our own reason and judgment to understand the revelation ; which cannot possibly be otherwise. For whoever it be that speaks to us, whether God by an immediate voice from heaven, or a prophet inspired by God, we have no way to understand what is said, but our own natural faculties, and therefore must judge of the sense of what is said, just as we do at other times when any man speaks to us. And if we were not present to hear the prophet speak, but have his revelations delivered to us in writing, we must take the same course to understand such a Divine book, as we do any other human writing ; if there be any difficulty in it, we must seek for somebody to help us to understand it, but still we must understand for ourselves, for nobody else can understand for us, and if we must understand, we must judge for ourselves too. This is all that we demand or desire, a liberty to understand and judge what God would have us believe and do ; and this the most infallible teacher cannot deprive us of, no more than he can oblige us to see and hear with other men's eyes and ears, when God has given us eyes and ears of our own.

And, fourthly, Where there is a standing revelation, we must then judge of the doctrine of all succeeding prophets, how infallible soever they be, by its conformity to the preceding revelation. We must never suppose, that God can contradict himself, and therefore, though he may improve a former revelation by new and more perfect discoveries, yet he can never contradict it ; and hence it follows, that no true prophet can contradict a true revelation ; but though a power of miracles

may give authority to a new prophet to expound a former revelation, and to improve it, yet we must be well satisfied, that the doctrine of this new prophet be agreeable to the old revelation; which makes us judges of the sense both of the old and the new revelation: for it is impossible we can understand their agreement, unless we can judge of the sense of both.

This was the case of Christ and his Apostles, when they appeared in the world. The law of Moses, and the writings of the Prophets, were the standing revelation, which God had given to the Jewish nation, whereby they were to try all prophets. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah viii. 20; and therefore, though Christ wrought more and greater miracles than ever Moses did, this alone had not been a sufficient reason to believe him, had not his person answered the types and predictions of the law, and his doctrine been not the destruction, but the improvement and perfection of the Mosaical dispensation. To this trial he submitted himself and his doctrine, appeals to Moses and the Prophets, requires them to "search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me," John v. 39; and after his resurrection from the dead, which one would have thought had been sufficient of itself to have confirmed his Divine authority, yet he proves from Scripture, that "thus Christ ought to suffer, and to enter into his glory, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them (the two disciples going to Emmaus) the things concerning himself," Luke xxiv. 26, 27. And this course the Apostles took in their sermons. St. Peter did not only testify to the Jews, as an eye-witness, that "Christ was risen from the dead," but proves that David himself had prophesied of this, Acts ii. 22, &c. Thus St. Paul disputed with the Jews at Rome, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, "persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening," Acts xxviii. 23. Thus his Epistle to the Romans is one entire dispute about the obligation of the law, and justification by faith in Christ, from the types and predictions of the law itself. So that Christ and his Apostles were certainly as infallible teachers, as ever were in the world, yet they did not bear men down merely by their infallible authority, but appealed to the Scriptures, and to every man's own judgment of them, and God had ordered it so, that it could not be otherwise; for he had given them

a standing revelation, whereby they were to judge of all new prophets, whatever they were; but if they must have relied on the bare word of such prophets, whom they were to try by this revelation, for the sense and interpretation of it, this had been the same thing as to take their own word without any trial.

Now if Christ himself never pretended to any such authority, that all men should believe him upon his own word, without examining his doctrine by the Scriptures, or exercising their own reason and judgment; can we think, that he should give any such authority to St. Peter? Nay, when it is evident, that St. Peter never had any such authority, and never could exercise it, how can St. Peter's successors have that in his right, which he never had or could have himself? For though he was an infallible teacher, yet every man had a liberty to examine what he taught, and to judge of it by its conformity to the Law and the Prophets.

But you will say, could not Christ appoint an infallible judge of controversies in his Church, to decide all disputes, and to prevent heresies and schisms? That Christ has not done this, I shall take for granted, till I see some better proofs of it than I have yet met with; and I have some reason to think such a judge could not be appointed, whom we should be obliged to rely on with an implicit faith, without examination, or any use of our own reason and judgment; and that is, because it was impracticable to appoint a judge, upon whose bare authority we are bound to believe the truth of Christianity itself: Christ and his Apostles did not assume to themselves to be such judges in their days, for there lay an appeal from them to Moses and the Prophets, as you have already heard, and so there does to this day; and if I must not take any man's word for the truth of the Christian religion, I must not take his word neither for the truth of any doctrine in Christianity. If I may to this day examine the Gospel by the Law and the Prophets, as the Jews did in our Saviour's days, then I must judge for myself too, as they did, and not believe any pretence of infallibility against my own sense and reason. I cannot compare the doctrine of the Law and the Gospel, unless I understand them both, and I can understand and judge only with my own understanding; and if I must have done thus, though I had lived in our Saviour's days, surely I must do so now, whatever infallible teachers there may be in the world; which, I think, is a demonstration, that there neither is nor

can be any such infallible judge, whom I am bound to believe purely upon his own authority.

But it may be objected, that this proves too much, and undermines even the Protestant resolution of faith into the authority of Christ and his Apostles, and the writings of the New Testament, as an infallible rule of Christian faith and manners. For it seems, though we pretend to own their infallibility, yet we must examine their doctrine by the law, and not believe them to be infallible, till we have sat in judgment on their doctrine, and approved it as agreeable to a more infallible rule; and thus we believe their infallibility, because we like their doctrine; not believe their doctrine, because they are infallible.

Now there is so much truth in this objection, that I cannot believe that Christ and his Apostles are teachers come from God, unless I be satisfied that they teach nothing contrary to any former revelation, which God has made of his will; for God cannot contradict himself, and therefore whoever contradicts what God has before taught, can be no true prophet. And, therefore, though miracles alone were sufficient to give authority to Moses, who was the first prophet by whom God made a public revelation of his will, yet miracles alone were not sufficient to give authority to any succeeding prophets, but their doctrine also must be examined by its conformity to the law; for though miracles gave them authority to make new revelations, yet not to contradict the old. So that to examine the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles by the law, so far as to see that they do not contradict it, is no more than to examine, whether they be true prophets or not, as all men ought to do before they believe any pretenders to prophecy; but when it appears that they do not contradict the law, then that power of working miracles, wherewith they are endowed, obliges us to believe them in every thing else upon their own authority. And thus we own Christ and his Apostles to be infallible teachers (and consequently receive the writings of the New Testament as an infallible rule of Christian faith) because they were men endowed with supernatural powers, and did not in their preaching contradict any former revelation of God's will. And this is all that we do, or need affirm, to destroy the pretences of an infallible judge; for if I must still judge for myself, whether the doctrine of the Gospel do not contradict the law, then I must judge for myself, both of the sense of the Law and the Gospel, or else I cannot judge, whether they agree or

disagree ; and therefore there can be no infallible judge, to whom I must submit my own reason and judgment in this inquiry, for that were to own their infallibility, before I know whether they are infallible or not.

Though I must believe whatever an infallible judge teaches, yet I must not believe him till I know him to be infallible ; and, I should think, no pretender to infallibility should exempt himself from such a trial, as all prophets after Moses, even Christ and his Apostles themselves, submitted to ; that is, to have their doctrine tried by a standing revelation. Now suppose the Pope, or Church of Rome, to set up for this infallible judicature ; before I can own their infallibility, I must at least examine, whether what they teach do not contradict the Law and the Prophets, for thus I may and must examine the Gospel itself, and if in any one thing they plainly and directly contradict the law, I have nothing more to do with their infallibility ; for no man can be infallible, who mistakes in any one thing.

The Church of Rome then teaches, that "we may give religious worship to saints and angels, and images." Having the law of Moses in my hand, I turn to it, and according to the best of my understanding, I find this worship expressly forbid in the first and second Commandments. "No," say they, "this is your mistake ; we are the infallible judges, and you must not trust your own understanding, but take the sense of the Church in it." By your favour, gentlemen, say I, you are a little too hasty with your infallibility ; when I am satisfied you are infallible, I will trust you ; but I am now inquiring whether you are infallible or not, and, therefore, as yet, we are upon even ground, and I must trust my own judgment till I find one more infallible. Now, I say, you contradict the first and second Commandments, and, therefore, are not infallible, and you would prove, that you do not contradict these Commandments from your pretended infallibility, which is the thing yet in question. Christ and his Apostles permitted men to judge for themselves, whether they contradicted the Law and the Prophets, and therefore suffered them to judge of the sense of the law too ; and so must you do also, unless you pretend an exemption from all trial and examination, which Christ and his Apostles never pretended to. This shews, that even to this day no pretence of infallibility can exempt men from having their doctrine tried by the Law and the Prophets ; for the Gospel itself may still be thus tried, and therefore there can be no such infallible

judge as has any authority to oblige us to believe any sense they put upon the law, contrary to our own sense and reason ; for then such a judge as this could not be tried by the law : for if he alone has authority to interpret the law, no body can try him but himself. And this plain instance, I have given of their contradicting the first and second Commandments, utterly overthrows their infallibility, till they can prove, not by their pretended infallibility, but by plain reason and argument, that they do not contradict them. And we desire no more than to set aside their plea of infallibility, and we will reason the case with them when they please.

And besides this, by a parity of reason this argument reaches much farther : for if the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles must be tried by the Law and the Prophets, because no man can have any authority against a standing revelation ; then by the same reason, whoever should now set up for an infallible guide, his doctrines must be examined by the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, which is now an infallible rule to us. And if the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles might be examined by the Law and the Prophets, for the very same reason the doctrine of all succeeding bishops must be tried by the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles ; for they are as much a standing revelation to the Christian Church, as the Law and the Prophets were to the Jews. Nay, indeed, there is more reason now to examine the doctrine of all teachers by the writings of the New Testament, than there was under the Jewish dispensation to examine them by the Old ; because the New Testament is the last and most perfect revelation of God's will, and we must expect and receive no more ; for St. Paul pronounces an anathema against angels themselves, should "they preach any other Gospel," Gal. i. 8, 9, whereas the law itself gave expectations of a more excellent prophet than Moses, and of a more perfect revelation ; and, therefore, as they were to receive no prophet who contradicted the law of Moses, so we must receive none who preach any thing else, than what Christ and his Apostles have taught. Now if the New Testament be all that, and more than that to us, which the Old Testament was to the Jews, then we must have the same liberty of judging under the New Testament, which the Jews had under the Old : for there can be no more danger in our judging of the sense of the Gospel, and examining the doctrines of all men by it, than there was in allowing this liberty to the Jews ; we have

the same natural right to it which the Jews had ; a right, not owing to a positive institution, but to the reason and necessity of the thing.

But to set aside this dispute about the possibility of such an infallible judge of controversies, this very consideration proves, that Christ never intended it ; *viz.* That he has given us the Gospel in writing, as a standing rule of faith and manners, and has appointed an order of men to study the Scriptures themselves, and to instruct others in the true sense and interpretation of it.

I. Because he has given us the Gospel in writing, which is now to us a standing rule of faith and worship, as the Law and the Prophets was to the Jews. Now the use of a written law is for every body to understand it, and direct their faith and manners by it. This was the use the Jews were required to make of the Old Testament, and certainly the New Testament was writ for the same end, or else I know not why it was writ : if then we must learn from the Scriptures what we are to believe and practise, this inevitably proves, that our Saviour's intention was that we should judge for ourselves ; for no man can learn anything from a writing, unless he be allowed to understand it and judge of the sense and meaning of it : now is this not a plain proof, that Christ never intended such a judge of controversies, whom we must believe with an implicit faith ? If I must receive my faith upon the authority of a judge, then there is no need of a rule which I must, and can make no use of ; if I must follow my rule, there is no room left for a judge, for I must judge for myself : to resolve my faith into the authority of a rule and of a judge, are as inconsistent as judging and not judging, and therefore Christ could not appoint both ways, because they contradict each other ; one requires the exercise of my own reason and judgment, and the other forbids it ; and therefore since Christ has given us a written rule, we may reasonably conclude he has appointed no judge. For though a law and a judge to execute that law, are very consistent in civil government, where the sentence of a judge does not oblige men's faith, but only authoritatively determines a difference, yet they are two very contrary and therefore inconsistent resolutions of faith.

Secondly, As Christ has given us a rule, so he has appointed an order of men to study this rule themselves, and to instruct other Christians in the meaning of it, which is an argument he intended we should understand it. For why should we be

taught the Scripture, but that we may understand it ; and to what end should we understand it, but to make it our rule ? To teach and instruct, and to determine as a judge, are two very different things ; the first reserves to us a liberty of judging ; the second determines us to believe the dictates of our judge. Now what need of both these ? If Christ hath appointed a judge, whom we must in all things believe, what need of teachers to instruct men in the knowledge of the Scriptures ? If the Scriptures have no sense, but what the judge gives them, what an impertinent trouble is it to study the Scriptures ? Who can interpret them but this infallible judge ? And how then can there be so many teachers, if there be but one judge ? Or if the Scriptures may be understood, and may be taught, what use is there of a judge, unless it be to unteach what he has not a mind to ? And then he may make all other teachers useless when he pleases. Nay, if the greatest Apostles were no more than teachers, where is the judge ? And yet this is the only commission Christ gave to all the Apostles, and to Peter among the rest, to teach those things which he had commanded them. The charge Christ gives to Peter is, to feed his sheep and his lambs, which is the same St. Paul lays on the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28 : that is, to instruct and teach them ; which is the reason St. Paul assigns for those different orders of men in the Church. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13. Here is no judge of controversies mentioned among all these, though he had been worth them all, and indeed, had made all the other useless, if there had been any such office. But that which I observe is, that the work of an Apostle was to instruct men in the faith, to teach them knowledge and understanding, what they are to believe, and why ; which is very inconsistent with the office of a judge. For he who instructs men, helps them to understand and judge for themselves ; but a judge only imposes upon the faith and understanding of men without any liberty of judging. If we

must not understand our religion, nor use our understanding in judging between truth and error, there can be no use for teachers, and therefore that Christ has appointed men to instruct his Church, is a proof that he intended they should believe with their understandings; and if all the Apostles, even St. Peter himself, had no other commission but to teach, then their authority could not extend farther than their teaching; that is, they could not oblige men to believe more than they could make them understand the reason of.

Well, but if Christ have not appointed a judge of controversies, what certainty can we have of our religion? And what care has Christ taken of the unity of the Church? These are two points which must be considered, and if we can give a fair account of them without a judge of controversies, there will be so little need of such a judge, that there will be no great reason to contend about him.

First, As for certainty; why cannot we be certain of our religion, as well as of other matters, without an infallible judge? Does any man want an infallible judge to make him certain of the sense of a plain law, or any other intelligible writing? To understand the difference between true and false reasoning? To know what kind of evidence he may rely on as to matters of fact, which were done in a remote country, or before he was born? Now if we can be certain of any thing without an infallible judge, then certainty does not depend upon infallibility, because we can be certain without it: certainty of knowledge depends upon the certainty of evidence. What we have certain evidence for, we may be certain of; and what we have not certain evidence for, we can never be certain of. To depend upon authority, though it be supposed infallible, is but one sort of evidence, and one kind of certainty, *viz.* the certainty of authority; and therefore if there be other kinds of evidence and certainty for our religion, besides the authority of an infallible judge, then we may be certain still, though there were no infallible judge: for where there are more means of certainty than one, the taking away one does not destroy all certainty: now I would fain see that man, who will venture to say, that we have no possible way to be certain of the truth of Christianity, or what Christ and his Apostles taught, but only the testimony of an infallible judge; for then there is no way left to make men Christians, unless they will own an infallible judge, before they believe Christianity, which will argue great good nature in them.

Well! But suppose there were other possible ways to attain a certainty in religion, yet there is none so easy, none so certain as an infallible judge, which delivers us from tedious inquiries, and doubtful disputes, and makes all men orthodox whether they will or know: now, for this very reason, I reject an infallible judge, because it is very plain Christ never intended such a degree of evidence as this. Faith is a Christian grace and virtue, and therefore must be an act of the will as well as of the understanding, which supposes that the evidence is not irresistible; for it is no virtue to believe that the sun shines when we see it. Such evidence as forces an assent, is inconsistent with the nature of faith, considered as a virtue, which is a free and voluntary assent, upon such evidence as is sufficient to satisfy an honest man, but not to compel an obstinate infidel or heretic to believe. Of this nature is that evidence we have for the truth of Christianity. Miracles alone, as I observed before, did not prove Jesus to be the Messias or Christ, for then all men, who saw his miracles, must have believed him, as they did Moses; but besides this, they were to inquire whether his person answered the characters the Prophets had given of the Messias, and whether his doctrine were reconcileable with their law; and here the passions and prejudices, and lusts and interests of men might interpose and corrupt, and bias their judgments, and whether they would believe, or would not believe, did very much depend upon the temper and disposition of their minds. Hence our Saviour attributes the infidelity of the Scribes and Pharisees to their pride and covetousness, and such like evil causes, and requires an honest and teachable mind to prepare and dispose men to receive the Gospel. Such he calls his sheep: "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John x. 26, 27. Now, if this be all the evidence he has afforded the world of his own being the Messias, which is the very foundation of the Christian religion, the superstructure cannot be more firm and certain than the foundation is, and therefore the same kind of evidence which Christ thought sufficient to prove himself to be the Messias, must be sufficient also for all the ends of religion. Christ has no disciples but sincere honest men, and therefore has given us such a degree of evidence and certainty, as may be a trial of our honesty. It is of no concernment, whether bad men be infidels or heretics; and then if there be sufficient evidence

and certainty to satisfy honest men, it is enough, and there is abundant evidence for this purpose without an infallible judge, and therefore there can be no need of him

And besides this, our Saviour has promised the assistance of his Spirit, not only to work faith in all well disposed minds, but to enlighten their understandings, and to guide them in the diligent use of those means he has prescribed to find out truth ; which though it does not make them absolutely infallible, which there is no need of to carry men to heaven, yet it preserves them from all great and fatal mistakes. Now I would desire any man to tell me, what need there had been of the internal illuminations of the Spirit to direct us in our inquiries after truth, if Christ had provided such an external infallible means as a judge of controversies.

And though honest men are not infallible, yet they have this security as to their speculative mistakes, which have no ill influence upon their lives ; that the mercies of God do as well extend to the infirmities of our understanding, as of our wills. For if an involuntary ignorance will be some excuse even to bad men, to lessen their punishment, much more may we presume it will excuse good men.

To demand such a degree of evidence and certainty as God has not thought fit to give us, does great mischief to religion ; for this makes some men atheists and others infidels. The infidels think, that seeing there is not evidence enough for the Christian religion to force an assent, therefore they are not bound to believe it ; the Church of Rome owns this, that there is not sufficient certainty without an infallible judge ; and hence they argue that there must be an infallible judge, and that the Pope, or Church of Rome, is that judge. Now, let the infidel and the Romanist dispute it out which of these two is the best consequence ; that since we cannot be certain of our religion, whether we should wholly reject it, or set up a judge of controversies ; and in my opinion the infidel seems to have the better of it : for it is a natural and immediate consequence not to believe what we are not certain of ; but I can see no connection in the world between the want of certainty and the necessity of an infallible judge ; something to be sure must come between to unite them together, and the least we can think of is this, that it is necessary we should be certain in matters of religion, and that there is no way to make us certain but an infallible judge ; and therefore, since there is no certainty in religion without such a judge, we must grant that there is one. But

now if this be granted, that there wants evidence to make Christianity certain, how do they prove that it is necessary we should be certain of it? Which signifies that it is necessary we should be certain of that which is not certain? and methinks it wants a little proof too that a judge of controversies is the only possible way to make men certain. I would advise all Papists not to press this argument of the uncertainty of religion too far, lest when they come to consider it thoroughly it make them infidels.

But if men will be but reasonable, what greater certainty can they desire than we have. The revelation of the will of God contained in a plain and intelligible writing, which all honest and diligent inquirers, at least with the help of a guide, may understand in all things necessary to salvation, the promise of the Divine Spirit to enlighten our minds to understand the Scriptures, and to persuade us of the reason and certainty of our faith, and the mercies of God to pardon involuntary mistakes.

Secondly, The next pretence for an infallible judge is *unity*. For we see by sad experience that while every man judges for himself, the Christian Church is divided into sects and parties, who first differ in their judgment of things, and then separate from each other's communion; and thus it necessarily must and will be, till all submit to one sovereign authority, and unite in one visible head. And therefore since it is evident that Christ intended that all his disciples should live in unity with each other, which he so strictly enjoined, and so passionately recommends; we must conclude that he has appointed some effectual means to end all controversies, and to unite them in one communion, which can be no other than an infallible and governing head. Now in answer to this I consider,

1. That a supreme visible head, as suppose the Pope of Rome, is not necessary and essential to the unity of the Church; for if all Christian Churches lived in communion with each other they would be one Church, though they were all equal, without owning the supremacy of one over the rest. And therefore, that Christ instituted but one Church, and requires all the several parts of it to live in communion with each other, does not prove the necessity of one visible head, because they may be one without such a head, and it is easy to prove that this is all the unity Christ intended; but of this in the answer to the following Papers.

2. Though Christ has made unity necessary with the neces-

sity of duty, it does not hence follow that he has appointed infallible and necessary means of unity. I suppose all men will grant that Christ has made holiness as necessary as unity, and yet he has appointed no necessary and infallible means to keep men from sin ; but we see the state of the Church suffers as much by the wickedness as by the divisions of her members ; unity is a necessary duty, and so is holiness ; but the practice of both is the object of our own choice and liberty ; and if the commands and exhortations of the Gospel, and the hopes and fears of another world, with the assistances of the Divine grace, will not make men do their duty, I know of nothing else that can ; and I do not see how Christ is more concerned for the unity than for the holiness of his Church.

3. For, thirdly, I think it a great mistake to attribute all diversities of opinions to want of evidence, and all divisions to diversities of opinions ; for it is plain that the lusts and interests of men have a great hand in both, or else both heresies and schisms are more innocent things than I took them to be. All the world cannot preserve men who have any interest to serve by it, from being heretics ; for interest will make men teach heresies without believing them, or believe them without reason ; and interest and faction will divide the Church where the faith is the same, of which the Donatists of old are a sad example. And there is a present and sensible example of this, which the Romanists must own ; and yet if they own it, it utterly destroys all their pretences to infallibility and supremacy, as such certain and infallible remedies for heresy and schism. For they must say as they do, that Christ has vested St. Peter and his successors, the Popes of Rome, with the supremacy of the Church ; here then is their infallible cure of schism : how then come all those schisms that are in the Church ? For there are a good number of them, notwithstanding the Pope's supremacy, and some more for that reason. Has not Christ appointed an head of unity ? Yes ; but other bishops and Churches would not submit to him. How ? Not to Christ's vicar ? How comes this to pass ? Why, they dispute his authority : and has not Christ plainly given him this authority ? Yes ; but they won't see it : but is this inculpable ignorance, or pride and faction ? If the first, then they must grant there wants certain evidence for this infallible head, and this they must not say ; if the second, then the vices of men will make the institution of a supreme head as ineffectual to prevent schisms, as the commands of our Saviour are ; and it

argues a good degree of assurance in the Church of Rome to pretend the necessity of an infallible head and judge of controversies, to prevent heresies and schisms, when, though they say that Christ has appointed such a head and judge, yet the experience of the world for sixteen hundred years tells us that there are never the fewer heresies nor schisms for it; by which it appears that this is not an infallible remedy against them. Well! but it would be so if all men would submit to the authority of this infallible judge: very right! And so any other way would do in which all men would agree, for then I guess they would be all of a mind; but this gives no advantage to an infallible judge above any other means of union, and therefore the necessity of unity does not prove the necessity of an infallible judge. For if the Romanists be in the right, that Christ did appoint such a judge, and such a judge be such an infallible means of unity, we should have had no dispute about it at this day; and therefore they must be out in one, either Christ has appointed no such judge, or this cannot prevent schisms in the Church.

4. Fourthly, There is an easy and effectual way of curing Church divisions without a judge of controversies, nay, without making all men of a mind in every thing, which must never be expected in this world: and that is, not to make the necessary terms of communion straiter and narrower than Christ has made them; nothing but what is plainly revealed in Scripture, and is essential to Christian faith and worship. For such matters most Christians agree in, and though they may have some private opinions of their own, this ought not to divide communions, while they do not impose them upon the faith of others, nor introduce any new and strange worship into the Christian Church.

As for example: The Church of England believes and practises whatever was thought necessary in the Apostles' days, and for some ages after; and there is little or no dispute about these matters between us and the Church of Rome, so that we could to this day, without a judge of controversies, maintain communion with the Church of Rome upon the same terms that the Apostolic Churches maintained communion with each other, for we both agree in all things which are necessary and essential to Church communion. So that the schism between us and the Church of Rome is not for want of a judge of controversies, for without owning such a judge, we agree in all that is necessary, in all that Christ and his Apostles required to

make us members of the Christian Church. But this will not satisfy the Church of Rome, which will receive no other Churches into her communion, without owning her sovereign and supreme authority, nor without believing many doctrines manifestly absurd in themselves, and never taught in the best and purest ages of the Church; nor without joining in such a worship, which they themselves dare not say is necessary (for they do not pretend that for their praying to saints, and worshipping images, and prayers in an unknown tongue), and which we think is sinful. If these things were removed, we could gladly communicate with them upon true catholic principles. There is no need of a judge, but only to determine those controversies which she herself has made in contradiction to the primitive faith of Christians; and therefore I cannot but commend her policy, that she will allow nobody to be judge of these disputes but herself. Would all men submit to the Church of Rome, it would certainly restore peace and unity to the Church, but to the great prejudice of truth, and hazard of men's souls, and we must not purchase a mere external unity at this rate. Those men over value unity who part with truth for it; for certainly the unity of the Church is not more considerable than the purity of its faith and worship.

The Paper.

"These reasons make me think a visible judge absolutely necessary."

Answer.

What I have already discoursed, I hope, may occasion some new and different thoughts of this matter; but since certainty is the great and prevailing argument, let us turn the tables, and see what certainty a Roman Catholic has. His faith is resolved into the authority of a visible and infallible judge. This, I confess, bids very fair; for he that follows an infallible guide cannot err; but whoever considers this matter carefully will find all this talk of infallibility dwindle into nothing. For,

First, Suppose there be an infallible judge, before we can with certainty and assurance rely on him, we must certainly know who he is; for it is the same thing to have no infallible judge, and not to know where to find him. And this is a difficulty which those persons little consider, who please themselves so much with the fancy of infallibility. For,

1. Papists themselves are not agreed about this matter. Some will have the Pope to be infallible, as Peter's successor, and in his right. Others, the Church assembled in a General Council ; others, neither Pope nor Council distinctly and separately considered, but a Council confirmed by the Pope : others, none of all this, but tradition is infallible. Infallibility they all agree to, but know not where this infallibility is seated. Now what shall a doubting Protestant do, who has a mind to be as infallible as any of them, did he know where to find this infallibility ? May he not as easily choose his own religion, and what Church he will live in communion with, as which of these infallible judges to follow ? Which soever of these he rejects, he has a considerable party of the Church of Rome on his side ; the only difference is, that he is so far satisfied with their reasons against each other, that he rejects them all ; and he has good reason for it ; for if God had intended to appoint a judge to end all disputes, certainly he would have done this so manifestly, that there should have been no dispute who this judge is : for, methinks, a doubtful and disputable judge is not a very proper person to end all disputes.

2. Nay, according to the doctrine of the Roman divines, it is not possible to prove either that there is such a judge, or who this judge is. For if there be such a judge, he must be appointed by Christ, and then we must look for his commission in the Gospel ; and yet the Church of Rome will not allow us to know what the Gospel is, or what is the sense and interpretation of it, but from the infallible judge. And thus it is impossible to find out either the judge or the Scriptures, because we have no place to begin at. If we begin with the judge, we are a little too hasty, because we have not yet found him ; and if we begin with the Scriptures, that is as bad, because we cannot understand them before we have found the judge ; so that we must take one of them for granted without any proof, and by that find out the other, and that is neither better nor worse than to take them both for granted ; which is an admirable foundation for infallibility, at all adventures to choose an infallible judge, and then to believe him at all adventures !

So that though men, who have always been brought up in the belief of an infallible judge, may in time grow very confident of it, and take it for a first principle, which needs no proof ; yet I wonder how any Protestant, who has been taught otherwise, and if he acts wisely and like an honest man, cannot

believe it, till it is proved to him, can ever entertain such a thought ; for let his adversary be never so subtle, if he resolves to believe nothing but what he sees proved, he may maintain his ground against him. As to represent this briefly in a dialogue between a Papist and a Protestant.

Papist. I pity your condition, Sir, to see you live at such uncertainties for your religion, and obstinately refuse to consult that living oracle and infallible judge, whom God hath placed in his Church, to decide all controversies in faith and worship.

Protestant. Sir, I thank you for your charity ; and though I do not find myself so uncertain, as I perceive you think I am, yet I should be glad of such an infallible guide as you talk of, if I knew where to find him.

Pap. He is to be found in the Church of Rome ; for that is the Church which is the pillar and ground of truth ; there is St. Peter's chair, whom Christ made the supreme governor of his Church, whom he commanded to feed his lambs and his sheep ; that rock on whom Christ promised to build his Church, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it ; and therefore in communion with this Church, and in obedience to the supreme pastor of it, you cannot err.

Prot. But pray, how shall I be sure of this ?

Pap. Do you ask that now, when I have referred you to such plain texts of Scripture for the proof of it ?

Prot. Will you allow me then to interpret these texts according to my own private judgment ? And why then may I not use my judgment in other matters ? For I think all the articles of my Creed are as plain in Scripture, as that the Pope or Church of Rome is the supreme infallible judge ; and, indeed, if I must stand to my own judgment in this matter, I can find no such thing in these texts you have alleged.

Pap. Your own judgment ! No, by no means, this causes all the heresies in the world, that men will presume to judge for themselves.

Prot. What course must I take then ?

Pap. You must stand to the judgment of the Church, which cannot err ; and whatever heretics say, she will tell you, that these texts prove the Church's infallibility.

Prot. Hold, Sir, what is it we are to prove ?

Pap. That the Church is infallible.

Prot. And this I must prove from Scripture.

Pap. Yes.

Prot. And must not rely on my own judgment neither for
VOL. IV. 2 A

the sense of Scripture, but on the interpretation of the Church.

Pap. Right! This is the true Catholic way.

Prot. That is, I must take the Church's word that she is infallible.

Pap. No, you must believe the Scripture, which says so.

Prot. But I must believe the Scripture, not because I understand this to be the sense of it, but because the Church so expounds it.

Pap. Right! for heretics expound it otherwise.

Prot. And what is this then but to take the Church's word for her own infallibility? What difference is there between taking the Church's word at the first or second rebound? To believe it, because she says it herself; or to believe it, because she makes the Scripture say it? And therefore if this be all you have to say, I must even keep where I am, and rather content myself without an infallible judge, than please myself with a mere imagination of infallibility, without any foundation to rely on.

Thirdly, And therefore the most learned advocates of the Church of Rome are forced to grant, that we have no infallible assurance of infallibility; for we cannot be infallibly certain which the true Church is. The only way they pretend to find out the true Church, is by marks and notes of a Church, which they say, indeed, have a moral certainty, though they are not infallible: for, according to their principles, they must not allow of any infallibility without the sentence and definition of an infallible judge, for then Protestants may set up for infallibility without a judge of controversies; and, therefore, since there can be no infallible judge to determine who is the judge of controversies, they must content themselves in this matter with moral certainty; and this brings them to an even level with poor fallible Protestants. They deal very hardly with us, if they will not allow that we may have at least as much certainty of the authority of Scripture, and the true sense and interpretation of it, as they can have of the notes of the true Church, which must be owned for the infallible judge; and if they be modest, and understand the weakness of their own cause, they ought to be very thankful to us, if we will allow them as much; and may not we then be as infallible as they? For, indeed, it is impossible that any moral certainty should grow up into infallibility.

As for instance: no man can be more certain of the decisions

of an infallible judge, than he is of his infallibility ; and, therefore, if he have not an infallible certainty of the infallibility of the judge, he cannot have an infallible certainty that he defines infallibly : and thus the whole faith of a Papist, after all their brags of infallibility, is resolved into moral certainty ; just as the faith of a Protestant is ; only not with so much reason. Let us take any one article of our faith, wherein Papists and Protestants agree, and see how much greater assurance Papists have of it than Protestants : as suppose "that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God." A Protestant believes this, because he has all the evidence that we can have for any thing of that nature ; that the Scriptures of the New Testament were writ by inspired men, and that the words of Scripture in their most plain and obvious acceptation, signify this ; and, therefore, that this is the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, who were infallible teachers : so that the last resolution of our faith is into the infallibility of Christ and his Apostles, which we have all the evidence of which sense and reason can give us. On the other hand ; a Papist believes that Christ is the eternal Son of God, because the Church, which is infallible, teaches so ; and he finds out the true Church by some notes and marks of a Church, which he thinks morally certain ; and when he has found the true Church, concludes her to be infallible without more ado. Now if the infallibility of Christ and his Apostles, be as good a reason of faith as the infallibility of the Church or Pope of Rome, and if we have as good evidence that the Gospel was writ by inspired men, and that such words are contained in the Gospel, as prove Christ to be the Son of God, as they have of their marks and notes, whereby they find out the true Church, then we have to the full as much certainty and infallibility as they have. They have but a moral evidence at best of the infallibility of their Church, and therefore are but morally certain that their Church teaches right ; and therefore if we have as much certainty as they have (and God forbid we should have no more), our faith is built upon as sure a foundation as theirs, without making a noise with infallibility, which at last dwindles into some arbitrary notes and marks of a Church.

And yet, fourthly, not to trouble ourselves at present with all the notes and marks which Cardinal Bellarmine and others give of a true Church, there is one mark, without which it is impossible we should be certain which is the true Church, and that is, that she professes the true faith and worship of Christ.

For this is essential to the Church, and there can be no Church without it; all other marks may deceive us: for whatever other marks there be, if there be not the true faith and worship of Christ, there cannot be the true Church; and, therefore, when the state of the Church, as it is at this day, is broken and divided into different and opposite communions, whoever will find out the true Church, must examine her doctrine and worship. Bellarmine himself makes the holiness of doctrine one essential mark of the true Church, and yet truth is antecedent to holiness, and equally essential. Now this is such a mark of an infallible Church, as makes her infallibility useless, when we have found her. For we must understand the true religion before we can know the true Church, and can be no more certain, which is the true Church, than we are which is the true religion; and therefore cannot resolve our faith into the authority of the Church, because we can know the true Church only by the true faith, and therefore must have some other means of finding out the true faith antecedent to the Church's authority; for that which is a mark to know something else by, must be first known itself. So that whereas the Church's authority is thought so compendious a way to make men infallibly certain of their religion, and to deliver them from those uncertain disputes that are in the world, we cannot be certain which the true Church is, on whose authority we must rely, till we have examined that diversity of opinions which divide the Christian Church, and have satisfied ourselves on which side the truth lies; and when we have done this, it is too late to appeal to a judge, unless we will undo all we had done before, and then we shall be to seek again which is the true Church. And what advantage then has the Papist above the Protestant in the point of certainty? when they cannot know which is that Church which they may safely trust, without examining the truth of her religion, and judging for themselves, just as we do. We are concerned, indeed, to know which is the true catholic Church, not that we must receive our faith upon her authority (for in order of nature we must know the true faith, before we can know the true Church); but because we are bound to live in communion with the true catholic Church of Christ.

Fifthly, And yet if they could find the Church without all this trouble, and Protestant uncertainty, wherever they place their infallibility, whether in the Pope or Council, according to their own principles, they cannot have so much as a moral

certainty of it. As for the Pope, though for argument's sake we should grant a true Pope to be infallible, yet it is impossible that any man can be certain, that there is a true Pope. For the Church of Rome teaches, that the intention of the priest is necessary to the sacrament ; that though he perform all the external part of it, yet if he do not intend to apply the sacrament to such persons, it is not applied. Now, according to these principles, who can tell whether this present Pope were ever baptized, or ordained priest or bishop ; for if the priests or bishops that did this, did not intend to do it, he is so far from being a true Pope, that he is no Christian. Nay, if the priests and bishops which baptized and ordained him, did intend to apply the sacraments to him, yet if those who baptized and ordained them did not intend to do it, then they were no Christians nor bishops themselves, and therefore could not confer orders on him, and so upwards still ; which reduces the matter to the greatest uncertainty in the world ; for how is it possible to know any man's private intention, when neither words nor actions shall be allowed a sufficient declaration of it ? And besides this, if a Pope be simoniacally promoted, or ordained by a simoniacal Pope, here is an invalidity to his orders, and then what becomes of his infallibility ? Nay, what shall we say of that long Papal schism, when there were three Popes together, John XXIII., Gregory XII., and Benedict XIII., who were all deposed by the Council of Constance, and Martin V. chose ? Was there never a true Pope among all the three ? If there were, what authority then had the Council to depose them all, and choose a fourth ? And who knows to this day, from whence the succeeding Popes have derived their succession ? which may very much call the Popedom and infallibility into question. And then as for Councils, which consist of bishops, there is the same uncertainty about them, whether they be true bishops or not, as there is about the Pope ; and besides this, there are so many disputes, what makes a General Council when it is regularly called, and when they act *Conciliariter*, in such a manner as a Council ought to act, to procure the infallible directions of the Spirit, and to give authority to their decrees, that if women and busy people cannot understand the Scriptures, and the reasons of their faith, I am sure they are much less able to understand what Councils they may safely rely on.

But suppose we did know who this infallible judge is, whether Pope or Council, and this judge should give us an in-

fallible interpretation of Scripture, and an infallible decision of all controversies in religion, which the Church of Rome never could be persuaded to do yet, and I believe never will, witness those many fierce disputes which are among men of their own communion ; and I think, no man is ever the more infallible for a judge, who will not exercise his infallibility ; yet if this judge should infallibly determine all the controversies in religion, we must either hear it from his own mouth, or receive it in writing, or take it upon the report of others. As for the first of these, there is not one in the world at this day, that was present at the debates of any General Council, or heard them pronounce their decrees and definitions, and, I believe, as few ever heard the Pope determine any question, *ex Cathedra*, which, what it means, either they do not well understand, or have no mind to tell us. As for writing ; when we see the decrees of a Council written, we can have only a moral assurance that these are the decrees of the Councils ; and when we have them, it may be they are much more obscure, and subject to as many different interpretations as the Scriptures are ; that we can have no better assurance what the sense of the Council, than what the sense of the Scripture is ; as experience tells us it is in the Council of Trent, which the Roman doctors differ as much about, as Protestants do about the sense of Scripture ; and though the Pope of Rome be made the judge of the sense of Councils, yet if he will not determine it, what are we the better ? If one Pope approves Cardinal Bellarmine's exposition of the Council, and another M. de Meaux, though directly opposite to each other, as we see at this day, how shall we ever come to an infallible certainty what the Council has determined ? Has not a Protestant, who studies the Scripture, and uses the best reason and judgment he has to understand it, as much certainty and infallibility as this comes to ? and yet how few are there, that have time or learning to read the Councils, which is a little more difficult than to read the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue ; and all these men must trust entirely to the honesty of their priest, who, if he be honest, may be very ignorant, and yet the last resolution of the people's infallibility, is into the honesty and skill of their priests ; for how infallible soever the Pope or Council be, if they know no more of the matter than what their priest tell them, which is such an infallibility as the meanest Protestant has no reason to envy.

This, I think, is sufficient to shew, how vain all this talk of

infallibility is in the Church of Rome ; though Protestants own themselves to be fallible creatures, yet they were too wise to change their moral certainty for the popish infallibility. Had the Church of Rome had as good evidence for their faith as the Church of England, it might admit of dispute, whether they should reject both, or cast lots which to choose ; but thanks be to God, there is no comparison between them, and while we feel ourselves certain, let who will boast of being infallible.

AN ANSWER

TO SOME OTHER ARGUMENTS CONTAINED IN THE PAPERS.

HAVING thus largely considered the main support of the Roman cause at this day, *viz.* the pretence of an infallible judge of controversies, the remaining arguments will be more briefly answered, which I shall set down in order, as I find them.

The Paper.

“ I do not know, supposing the Roman errors not damnable, how the Reformers can justify themselves ; and if they were so, I cannot make it agree with the promises of ‘ the gates of hell never prevailing,’ &c., except there were some other Church in which purity of faith was preserved ; which if there were, I wonder, for unity’s sake, so much commanded in Scripture, we did not join with that pure Church.”

Answer.

In answer to this short paragraph, there are several things to be considered : 1. Whether the errors of the Church of Rome be damnable. 2. If they be not damnable, what authority had the Church of England to reform them. 3. If they be damnable, how does Christ keep his promise to his Church, “ that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” 4. Concerning the purity of faith in other Churches, and our union with them.

1. As for the first, whether the Church of Rome be guilty of damnable errors : if by damnable errors be meant such errors as put men into a state of damnation, this I dare not say : for this would out-do the Church of Rome herself in

uncharitableness, to assert that all the Churches in the Roman communion, and every member of them as such, are in a state of damnation. But if by damnable errors be meant such errors as are very dangerous to men's souls, and will greatly hazard their salvation, or such errors as involve a sin in them, as being a direct breach of some Divine law, and so are damnable, as every sin is damnable, in this sense, we do say, that the Church of Rome is guilty of damnable errors. For to name no other at present, we do affirm and prove too, that the worship of saints and angels, and images, are express violations of the first and second Commandments, and therefore are great sins against God.

Now if you inquire, what the difference is between being guilty of damnable sins, and being in a state of damnation, the answer is plain and easy: for a state of damnation is such a state, wherein if a man commit damning sins, he has no right and title to pardon, forgiveness, and salvation, though he repent of all his known and unknown sins. This is the condition of all those who are not received into the Christian Church by faith and baptism; for the Christian Church only is a state of salvation: "for there is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved, but only the name of Christ." So that those who are out of the Church and Gospel covenant, are not only guilty of damning sins, but are in a state of damnation, for they have no covenant right to pardon and salvation. But those who believe in Christ, and are in covenant with him by baptism, though they may be guilty of damning sins, yet they are not in a state of damnation, because they have a right to pardon upon their repentance; and this is the condition of the Church of Rome, they profess the true faith of Christ, and are in covenant with him by baptism, and therefore, though they may be guilty of damning errors, yet they are in a state of salvation, that is, they are not excluded from the covenant of grace; and therefore the members of that communion, who live virtuous lives, and heartily repent of all their known and unknown sins, may find mercy with God. Thus St. Paul tells us of those who hold the foundation, that is, "faith in Christ Jesus," that if they build "hay and stubble" upon this foundation, that is, false and erroneous doctrines and worship, such a man shall suffer loss, in that his work shall be burnt, yet he "himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire," 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, where fire cannot refer to the fire of purgatory, because it is the fire of the day of judgment,

which is called "the day that shall be revealed by fire," ver. 13, and the works which shall be burnt, is the "hay and stubble" which is built on the foundation, that is, those erroneous doctrines or corrupt worship which men retain together with the faith of Christ, these works shall be burnt, that is, condemned in that day which is revealed by fire, which consumes those works, as fire does hay and stubble: and as for the persons themselves, the Apostle tells us, that "they shall suffer loss, that they shall be saved, but so as by fire." Where to suffer loss is opposed to receiving a reward, if a man's work abide, "he shall receive a reward;" if any man's work be burnt, "he shall suffer loss," which plainly signifies, that such erroneous Christians shall not receive such a reward as is prepared for sound and orthodox believers: and that phrase, "to be saved, but so as by fire," at least signifies, that at the day of judgment such men shall very difficultly escape burning with their works, though they shall be finally saved by their faith in Christ. But whatever be the meaning of some particular phrases in this obscure text, so much is very plain in it, that men who build hay and stubble upon the foundation, *i. e.* who believe in Christ, though with a mixture of many vain and hurtful superstitions, shall yet, if their lives be holy and virtuous, be saved by the faith of Christ, though with some loss and hazard, which makes the case of honest men, who live in very corrupt communions, not perfectly hopeless. And in this sense it is that we grant that salvation may be had in the Church of Rome, though this is no reason for any man to choose the communion of a corrupt Church; because there is a possibility of salvation in it. However, this shews what a great mistake this Paper is guilty of, where it is said, "that the best Christians in the Church of Rome, which believe such damnable doctrines, can be saved only by ignorance, which most Protestant divines believe the Pagans themselves may be." For though invincible ignorance is an equal excuse for Pagans and Christians, yet when this excuse is allowed, Pagans have not such a right to salvation as Christians have. Ignorance may excuse, but cannot save. It is only faith in Christ saves us, which corrupt Christians have, and Pagans have not, which is an essential difference.

Secondly, Suppose the errors of the Church were not damnable, why might not the Church of England reform such errors as are not damnable? Suppose they only obscure the glory of Christ's mediation, and are dangerous temptations to sin, or hinder the edification of the Church, or betray men to

false notions of God and of religion, though they are not in themselves damnable, why may not such errors as these be reformed? If the Church of Rome were convinced that she were guilty of such errors, ought she not to reform herself? And is not every Church in duty bound to preserve her faith and worship as pure and uncorrupt as she can? And why then is not the Church of England bound to do so? If indeed the Church of Rome had a supreme power over the Church of England, that nothing could be done without her approbation and order, then we would grant, that in case of tolerable errors, such a dependent Church could not reform itself, without the consent of its superior, as no private Christian can reform the Church wherein he lives, without the consent of the governors of it. But we say, that every national Church has the supreme independent power within herself, and therefore may correct any abuses and corruptions which are crept into her communion, without asking leave of the Bishop of Rome, or any other Church in the world; and this justifies the reformation of the Church of England, if she reformed nothing but what was erroneous, though the errors were not damnable, for all errors ought to be reformed when they are known, if the Reformers have just authority to do it; and such errors as are damnable, will justify any man to reform himself, and all that he can convince of such errors, for every man has authority to save his soul.

Thirdly, If the Church of Rome be guilty of damnable errors, how does Christ perform his promise to the Church, "That the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?" Now the difficulty of this objection consists only in the sound of those phrases, "the gates of hell;" by which some understand, that the devil shall never be able to corrupt the faith of the Church, for if he can do that, then say they, he prevails against the Church. But *πυλαι ἀδον* signify only destruction; for Hades is properly the state of dead men, who are laid underground, and appear no more in this world; and therefore when our Saviour promises, that "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against his Church," the meaning is, that there shall always be a Church in the world, professing that faith which here Peter had professed, and whereon Christ promised to build his Church, *viz.* "that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God." And such a Church there has been in the world ever since; and the Church of Rome itself, notwithstanding all the corruptions that are in it, is such a Church.

But that the Church may be overrun with great and damning

errors, is evident from St. Paul's prediction of the apostasy of the later days, "when the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4. For whosoever this man of sin is, he sits in the temple of God, that is, in the true Church of Christ; and while the man of sin sits in the Church, we need not doubt, but he brings some damning errors with him, and yet it is the temple of God, even when the man of sin sits there.

Fourthly, As for the last thing mentioned, it is sufficiently known, that there were a great many Christian Churches in the world at the time of the Reformation, who did not own the usurpations of the Church of Rome; and though they might have errors of their own, yet not of such fatal consequence: but if all the Christian world had been equally corrupted at that time, it had been the same thing to us, for corruptions ought to be reformed, and we had authority to reform ourselves. And as for joining in communion with other pure Churches, we do so; we own all pure Churches, nay, are ready to communicate with Churches which have some corruptions in their constitution, if they be tolerable, and do not render their communion sinful, which is all the obligation we have to communicate with any Church: for if by communion they mean that we should have put ourselves under the government and authority of any other Church (which is the sense of communion in the Church of Rome, which thinks no Church in communion with her without submitting to her authority), we beg their pardon for that, we will communicate with other Churches, as friends and equals, and brethren, but not as subjects.

Secondly, The next argument for a visible judge, which the Paper insists on is, "that without such a judge, we cannot know that every particular book of Scripture is canonical." And here are a great many objections started against the authority and certainty of the canon, which much more become sceptics and infidels, than Christians of any communion. I do not think them worth transcribing, for this argument may be answered without answering these objections, which the Church of Rome is as much concerned to answer as we. For those who originally made these objections, will not be put off with the authority of a judge, without a rational solution of these difficulties; and those who grant that there is no other answer can be given to them, but to resolve the

credit of the canon into the authority of a judge without any other reason, give up the cause of Christianity to infidels, who despise the vain pretences of such a judge.

If we cannot know what is canonical Scripture without a judge, how shall we know whether there be a judge? For there is no way to know this but by the Scriptures; if there be no such judge appointed in Scripture, we have no reason to own him, and if we cannot tell what Scripture is without a judge, how shall we find the judge by the Scriptures? And though the objection be made only against some particular books of Scripture, yet in truth it equally lies against the whole canon. For if we can know any one particular book of Scripture without a judge, why not the rest? No! some of them been doubted of; right! by some Churches, who did not know them, till they were satisfied by those Churches, which kept those sacred records, that they were true and genuine. But the question is, whether a book, which has been doubted of, when that doubt is removed, have not as certain authority as the rest. If it could not then, and cannot to this day, be proved to be genuine, why is it received? What obligation are we under to own it? If any books, which we call canonical, were still doubtful, it is more natural and reasonable to reject them, than to set up a judge without any authority, to give authority to them. For whether any book of Scripture be canonical is matter of fact, and the doctors of the Church of Rome themselves do not extend infallibility to matters of fact; and then by their own confession, there can be no infallible judge of the canon of Scripture, but we must content ourselves with such moral certainty as may be had. And if catholic tradition be so uncertain, that we cannot learn the canon of Scripture from it, what becomes of the authority of all their unwritten traditions, which they so much boast of? Thus some men, if they can but make a show of saying anything, never attend to consequences, nor consider whether their objections do not make as much against themselves and common Christianity, as against Protestants.

Thirdly, The last argument is, that the author of the Paper cannot make those articles of the Nicene Creed, "One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church," "the Communion of Saints," agree with the Protestant religion. Here is a little blunder in calling this the Nicene Creed, though easily pardonable; for it is a jumble of the Apostles' and Nicene Creed together. "The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints," is in the

Apostles' Creed ; "One Catholic Apostolic Church," the Nicene Creed. And why does not this agree with the Protestant religion ? for we profess to believe both these Creeds as sincerely as the Church of Rome.

No ! how can they be one, who disagree by adding in faith, or diminishing from it, who do not communicate together in prayer or sacraments, when they are not agreed in the essential things, how are they one ? Right ! Churches which differ in essentials are not one, but I hope there are few Churches do that ; I am sure they can never prove, that we deny any essential and fundamental article of faith. If this proves anything, it proves, that all the separate communions of Christendom are not one Church ; and what then ? how is the Church of England more concerned in this, than the Church of Rome ? Cannot we believe one Church in the Creed, as well as the Church of Rome, notwithstanding all the divisions of Christendom ? Do the mere divisions of Christendom prove the Church of Rome to be that one Church, or that the Church of England is no member of this one Church in the Creed ? The Church is but one, from the first planting of it by the Apostles to the end of the world, and the Church of Rome, as well as we, must own, that it is but one Church, notwithstanding the several divisions that have been in it in the first ages of the Church as well as now ; and therefore, the unity and communion of the Church must not be estimated by any one age of the Church ; but the Apostolic age must be the standard of Catholic unity and communion, as it is of the Catholic faith.

Suppose all the Churches of the world, at this day, were in communion with the Church of Rome, excepting the Church of England. Why then, you will say, it would be plain the Church of England were separated from the whole Church of Christ, and from catholic communion. Right ! From the Church of this age ; but the whole Church of this age is but a very little part of the catholic Church, were it sound and orthodox ; for I hope they will allow the Apostolic Churches, and the Churches of the three first ages, to be the best and purest parts of the one catholic Church, and that we must still maintain communion with them : if then the Church of England were separated from all the Churches of this age, yet if she be in communion with the Apostolic and Primitive Churches, she is in catholic communion still, if the Apostles themselves were in catholic communion. To know then, whether the

Church of England be a true catholic Church, and in catholic communion, we are not so much concerned to inquire what Churches she communicates with now, as whether she be in the Apostolic communion; which is the fountain and original of catholic communion. Now if the constitution of the Church of England, be such as to doctrine, worship, and government, that the Apostles themselves would have owned our communion, had we been in their days; how do we come to be schismatics now, and out of catholic communion? for catholic communion be the communion of the whole catholic Church, from the times of Christ and his Apostles to the end of the world, which is but one Church: and the Apostolic Churches are the true measure and standard of true catholic communion, then those Churches, which to this day are in communion with the Apostles, are in true catholic communion. And this test we will stand by, though I would not advise the Church of Rome to do so.

Let us consider, whether the Apostles would have rejected our communion for those reasons, for which the Church of Rome now rejects us? Would St. Paul have rejected our communion, because we will not worship God in an unknown tongue? which he himself forbids, 1 Cor. xiv; because we will not worship saints, and angels, and images? which the Romanists confess, was neither commanded nor practised in those days, and which we say, was forbid then, and understood to be so by all Christians. For not owning the supremacy of Peter, when St. Paul himself withstood him as much as we do the Pope of Rome, and upon a much less occasion, Gal. ii. 11, &c. And the African Churches long after, in the days of St. Cyprian, and by his authority, forbade all appeals to the bishop or Church of Rome. In a word, would the doctrine of transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, indulgences, purgatory, communion in one kind, private and solitary masses, and the like, have been thought a just reason in the Apostles' days to deny communion to all those Churches which reject them?

The Church of England is in communion with all those Churches from the Apostles' days till now, who never owned nor imposed those doctrines and practices, for which we now separate from the Church of Rome, as necessary terms of communion, which upon inquiry will be found a much more catholic communion, than that of the Church of Rome; for we communicate with more ages, and with more Churches than

they do. The Church of Rome, as now constituted in all its parts and proportions, is no older than the Council of Trent, which is some time since Luther : that we may with more reason ask them, where their Church was before the Council of Trent ? than they ask us, where our Church was before Luther ? We find our Church in its doctrine, worship, and government, in the Apostles' days ; but their Church was not made all at a time, but one age brought in one corruption, another, another. Some aspiring Popes began the encroachments upon the liberties of other Churches, and others kept the ground their predecessors had got, and as they had opportunity made new conquests, and thus by degrees it grew up into a papal omnipotency. Some thinking monks started some uncouth opinions, which were tossed about for a while in disputes, and if they were such as might be of use to advance the power of the Pope, or of the priest, they began to be countenanced at Rome, and that made honest men cautious of opposing ; and then they grew up into received doctrines, and when it was ripe for that purpose, they were dubbed articles of faith ; and at length were digested into method and order, refined and polished, and received their last authority from the packed conventicle of Trent. And will any man call this, catholic communion, the dividing terms of which were wholly unknown to the best and purest ages of the Church, crept in by degrees in several later ages, and never received its accomplishment and perfection till since the Reformation itself, and is now already in the wane, and almost expounded into Protestant heresy (at least so they would persuade us) by the Bishop of Meaux, and our modern representers. However, this shews, how among all the divisions of Christendom, we can prove ourselves to be a catholic Church, and in catholic communion, which is all that we at present are concerned for ; and let the Church of Rome do as much for herself, if she can. Upon these principles she now rejects us, it is plain she must have denied communion to the Apostolic Churches, and I am sure they would have denied communion to her : and what has become then of her catholic communion, which shuts out the Apostles' and Apostolic Churches ?

The Paper.

“ And, how in the communion of saints ? For that which I think makes a corporation become a body of men, is the obligation imposed on those who live in that corporation, to be

subject to the peculiar laws and government there established, for even of those that make Scripture their rule of all those Churches."

Answer.

I suppose the latter part of this is either false or hastily writ: if the meaning be, that the whole Christian Church is such a corporation as is under the same individual government, or one governing head, who must give laws to the whole Church; this we utterly deny, and it ought to have been proved. Christ at first committed the planting and governing his Church to twelve Apostles, who, as St. Cyprian affirms, had all equal power and authority, though Christ named Peter only in bestowing the Apostolical power, not to give Peter any superiority over the rest, but only to signify, that unity and harmony of consent, which ought to be among them in exercising the Apostolical power, that they were all to act as one man. The Apostles left their power to the bishops of the several Churches, who had the immediate inspection and sovereign power over their own Churches, as the same Father frequently asserts, but yet were to govern their several Churches with mutual advice and consent. So that the unity of particular Churches consists in their obedience and subjection to their bishop, and in the communion of all the members of it in all acts of worship and discipline: and those who separate from the external and visible communion of the Church wherein they live, without necessary and unavoidable reasons, are schismatics, who cut themselves off from the body of Christ. The communion of the catholic Church consists not in the subjection of one Church to another, but in the profession of the same faith, and in the agreement and concord of their bishops, in owning each other's Churches, and maintaining communion with them upon catholic principles, and governing their Churches, as far as is expedient, by common rules of worship and discipline. This then being the constitution of the catholic Church, let us briefly consider, what it is that unites particular Churches in catholic communion.

1. Every particular Church which professes the true faith of Christ, is part of the catholic Church, and by virtue of this catholic faith, is so far in communion with the whole catholic Church: and thus we own the Church of Rome herself to be part of the catholic Church; for she professes the true faith of Christ, though with a great mixture of dangerous errors.

2. The communion of particular Churches does not consist in using the same liturgies, or external rites of worship, if their worship be a true Christian worship, and agreeable to the general laws of the Gospel; for every Church has authority within herself to direct and model her own worship; and therefore, if there were no fault in it, yet the Church of England is not bound to receive her liturgies and worship from the Church of Rome, but may use her own without being charged with schism for doing so.

3. Every catholic Church is bound to receive each other's members to communion, when they come among them, which makes them all but one Church, one society and body, the members of which have a mutual right and interest in each other; and therefore it is a principle of catholic communion, not to adhere so stiffly to the rights and usages of our own particular Churches, as not to communicate with other Churches, who use different rites from our own, if they be innocent. Thus far all things are plain and easy; but the difficulty is, how we shall maintain communion with those Churches which teach very erroneous doctrines, or use very corrupt and suspected kinds of worship. And therefore,

Fourthly, How corrupt soever any Church be, if she still retains the true faith of Christ, we must own her for a Christian Church, though a corrupt one, which is one degree of communion with her, to own her of the same body with ourselves, though as a sick or rotten member. This was the charge against the Novatians and Donatists, not only that they had set up a distinct and separate communion, but that they unchurched the catholic Church, and therefore rebaptized those who had been baptized in the catholic communion, as if they had been infidels before. So that if there be any true church in the world besides the Church of Rome, the Church of Rome must necessarily be schismatical, because she unchurches all other Churches but herself, and therefore can have no degree of communion with them, as with Christian Churches; whereas we own the Church of Rome herself to be a true, though a very corrupt Church, and therefore maintain some degree of communion with her.

Fifthly, For it is evident, that if any particular Church do teach any erroneous doctrines, we must not maintain communion with her in her errors, for no man is bound to believe that which is false. But then we must distinguish between errors; for a Church may be guilty of some speculative errors,

which may do no great hurt to common Christianity, and then we may very safely communicate with that Church, if they do not impose on us the belief of those errors ; which few Churches do, but upon their own immediate members, excepting the Church of Rome. As for instance : the Lutheran doctrine of Consubstantiation is as false and groundless, though not altogether as absurd as the Popish doctrine of Transubstantiation ; but yet I would make no scruple of communicating with a Lutheran Church, where I may do it without professing my belief of consubstantiation ; and upon these principles the Lutheran and Calvinist Churches may communicate together, keeping their private opinions to themselves without imposing them upon each other. But if any Church which professes some speculative errors, will not admit us to communion without professing the same errors, we must own them for true Churches still, and profess our readiness to communicate with them in all acts of worship, if we may be allowed to do it without owning their errors ; and this makes us in communion with that Church, and that we do not actually communicate is none of our fault, but the fault of those who deny it. If the errors be such as are not merely speculative, but corrupt their worship, then indeed we must not only disclaim their errors but we must not join in those acts of worship, which are corrupted by them ; as the Popish mass is by the doctrine of transubstantiation. If their worship be partly pure and partly corrupt, then, notwithstanding their corruptions, we must be ready to join with them in all those acts of worship which are not corrupted. If their Church be generally corrupt, as it is in the Church of Rome, by their Latin Service, and Mass, and Ave Marias, and frequent addresses to saints and angels, in those very Litanies wherein they pray to God and Christ, we must wholly abstain ; but admonish and pray for them as brethren, and exercise all other acts of Christian communion, if they will admit of any.

By this we see, that there are several degrees of communion between distinct particular Churches, and therefore it does not presently follow, that because Churches divide communion in acts of worship, they do not belong to the same body. The true catholic faith, whatever errors and corruptions they are guilty of, makes them so far catholic Churches, and while we own them members of the same body, to which we ourselves belong, though we do not communicate in their errors and corruptions, we are still in communion with them ; and upon

these principles, notwithstanding all the divisions of Christians, there is but one Church still, to which all Churches belong, who profess the true faith of Christ, unless any exclude themselves from this Catholic Unity, by wholly excluding others.

Secondly, The next inquiry in the Paper is, "How the Church can be called holy, if for so many hundred years, as our Church teaches in the homily against idolatry, the whole Church of Rome has been guilty of idolatry?" This being the whole of the argument, I shall not transcribe the words. Now suppose the Church of Rome were the whole Church, and had for some centuries been guilty of idolatry in the worship of saints and images, and the Virgin Mary; yet they belong to the holy Church, just as they belong to the Church; by retaining the true faith of Christ, they are a true Church, though the many errors they have added, make them a very corrupt Church: and thus by professing the holy faith, and owning the great principles and doctrines of holiness, they are a holy Church, though their holiness may be far from being perfect, entire, and uncorrupt, as well as their faith.

When holiness is attributable to the visible Church, it cannot signify internal holiness and sanctification, for good and bad men are intermixed in the Church; and if the Church must be holy in this sense, all the members of it must be impeccable as well as infallible. But holiness signifies either their state or their profession. That they are in covenant with God, and so his holy and peculiar people, as the Jews were under the Mosaical covenant, who are therefore upon this account often called "a holy nation," even when they were guilty of idolatry in worshipping the golden calf, and had few visible marks of holiness in their lives; and for the same reason the Christian Church, which now succeeds into the privileges of the Jewish Synagogue, are called saints, the elect and chosen people of God, to signify that now God owns none for his people, but those who are admitted into the Christian covenant. And in this sense no Church can cease to be a holy Church, without ceasing to be a Church.

But then the Christian Church is holy by profession too, and that in a more eminent manner than the Jewish Church, because she professes a more perfect holiness; and whatever Church teaches the holy commands of our Saviour, and requires and professes obedience to them, is so far a holy Church by profession, though she may teach other things, which she may think holy, but indeed are not so. If holiness signify an

external and visible relation to God, and the profession of a holy religion, then that society which professes the true faith of Christ and holiness of life, so as to continue a covenant relation to Christ, is in this sense a holy Church, whatever corruptions she is guilty of, either in faith or practice, which do not unchurch her.

Thirdly, As for what remains in the Paper, it has been answered already upon other occasions. Schism, we confess, is a damning sin, and thank God that we are not guilty of it. We cast off the Roman yoke, which Christ never laid upon us, and to deliver ourselves from the unjust usurpations of foreign Churches is no schism, no more than it is rebellion to oppose the invasions of a foreign prince. We reformed our own communion, and that is no schism, for we had full authority to do it; and our reformation is such, that they may communicate with us, though we cannot communicate with them, for there is nothing sinful in our communion; and whatever they pretend, they can never prove that there is any thing wanting in it, necessary to salvation; and when we deny communion to no Church that will communicate with us, and require no sinful terms of communion, which can justify a separation from us, let them tell me wherein our schism consists.

The Paper.

“I cannot think those glorious promises sufficiently fulfilled, of the Holy Spirit’s leading them into all truth, and abiding with them, and that for ever.”

Answer.

Pray why not? That promise of leading them into all truth, was made to the Apostles, and was fulfilled in them, and extended to no others in that degree of infallibility; as is evident from the manner how the Spirit was to lead them into all truth, *viz.* by bringing to their remembrance all things which Christ had said to them, which can belong only to those persons who heard the sermons and discourses of Christ himself. For though a man may be taught what he never knew before, yet he cannot be said to remember what he never heard before. But when it is added that this “Spirit of truth shall abide with them for ever,” that “for ever,” must be appropriated to the Apostles, as it relates to an infallible direction; and their “for ever,” signifies no longer than they lived; for if it must be extended to all the successors of the Apostles, then there

must be as many infallible judges as there are successors to all the Apostles, in the several Churches founded by them, which will not serve the designs of the Church of Rome.

As for what follows, about the gates of hell not prevailing against the Church : I have already given an account of that ; for the gates of hell never prevail, while there is a Church which professes the faith which St. Peter then professed, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, which the Church of Rome herself has done in her greatest corruptions, excepting Pope Liberius's subscription to the Arian confession.

And whereas the Paper concludes with a desire to know how the Church of England is Catholic and Apostolic, the answer is very plain, because her doctrine, worship, and discipline is Catholic and Apostolic.

THE CONCLUSION.

An Address to wavering Protestants, shewing what little reason they have to think of any change of their Religion.

WHAT I have now discoursed in answer to these Papers, seems to me so very clear and plain, that I should not much question its good effect, even upon honest Papists, would they impartially read and consider it, much more upon wavering Protestants, if it be only some scruples, not interest, which sways them. But the better to fix such people, and that in the modern fashionable way, without disputing all the points in controversy, I shall desire them to consider, how much more certainty and safety they have in communion with the Church of England, than they can have by going over to the Church of Rome. And I think this is home to the purpose, it being the same argument wherewith the Roman priests endeavour to pervert our people, and which is the principal design of these Papers.

1. First, then, I observe that all the positive articles of the Protestant faith are owned and believed in the Church of Rome ; we do not believe all that they believe, but yet they believe all that we do ; for our faith is contained in the ancient Creeds, the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, which the Church of Rome owns as well as we. And though we do not build our certainty on the authority of the Church of Rome, but on the express revelations of Scripture, which contain all the articles of our faith, and is as much certainty as we desire, yet methinks even a modest Romanist should blush to charge our faith with uncertainty, when our faith, as far as it reaches, is the same with theirs. Surely they must grant, that in these matters, which we all consent in, our faith is true and orthodox ; they must grant, that the last resolution of our faith into the authority of Christ and his Apostles, is sound and orthodox also ; for thus they resolve their own faith : they must grant, that the universal consent of the Church in

all ages, not excluding the Church of Rome itself, as a part of the catholic Church, is the best external testimony of the Christian faith. Now when we believe the same things which the Church of Rome does, upon the authority of Christ and his Apostles, whose doctrine is contained in the writings of the New Testament, and expounded by the general faith of the Christian Church in all ages, what appearance of uncertainty can be charged on such a faith? We reject, indeed, the infallible authority of the present Church of Rome; but what then? Will not a true orthodox faith save us, unless we believe in Christ upon the authority of a particular Church, which had no being when Christianity was first planted in the world?

But I think I need not insist on this; for I cannot believe that any member of the Church of England goes over to the Church of Rome, because he cannot believe his creed in the Church of England. But then I would desire them to consider what the uncertainty is which they complain of in the Church of England; for if the positive faith of the Church of England is certain, as it must be if the faith of the Church of Rome as to these matters be certain, why do they leave us for want of certainty, which is now the popular argument to seduce men from our communion? If they think we do not believe enough, let them say so, and make that the cause of their departure from us; but if, as far as our faith goes, we have certain and evident reasons of our faith, how does our faith come to be uncertain?

As for those particular doctrines which are in dispute between us and the Church of Rome, we grant we have no certainty of them; nay, more than that, we say no man can be certain of them, how confident soever he is; for they are founded neither on reason nor Scripture, nor any good authority (for we do not take the authority of the present Church of Rome to be good authority), and if this be all they mean by our uncertainty, that we have no certainty for the worship of saints and images and relics, for transubstantiation and the adoration of the host, for prayers in an unknown tongue, for masses for the living and the dead, for a judicial absolution, and those new sacraments they have introduced into the Church, we readily grant it, but think this a very strange reason for Protestants to desert our communion, because we have no certainty of things which we believe to be false. We do not only confess, that we can find no certainty for these things, but we assert that we have positive and certain evidence

against them ; and those who have a mind to believe such doctrines as these, must go over to the Church of Rome to enlarge and improve their faith, for we shall never believe them. But if they can be contented with the faith which the Scriptures teach, and which the Primitive Church professed, we have as much evidence and certainty for that, as the Church of Rome herself has ; and how they can better themselves by going over to the Church of Rome, as to these points, I cannot tell, since we believe as orthodoxy as they.

Secondly, As for those doctrines and practices which we reject, because we have no evidence for them, but only the authority of the Church of Rome, which is no evidence to us, because it is not evident itself, we think ourselves much safer in rejecting, than we could be in owning them ; and that for this plain reason, that though we should be mistaken in rejecting such doctrines (as we are very certain we are not), yet they are such mistakes as do no injury to common Christianity, no dishonour to our common Saviour, and therefore cannot be dangerous to our souls ; whereas if the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome be, as we say they are, innovations and corruptions of Christianity, they are very dangerous and fatal corruptions. As to shew this in some few instances.

What injury is it to Christianity not to believe the infallibility of the Pope or Council, while we believe Christ and his Apostles to be infallible, which is infallibility enough to direct the Christian Church ? For while we adhere to what they taught, we can neither believe too little nor too much ; but if we believe the infallibility of the Pope, we are bound to stand to his authority, and to receive all his dictates without examination ; and how dangerous is this, if he should prove not to be infallible ? For then he may lead us into damnable errors, and we have no way to get out of them.

While we own the supremacy of our Saviour, who is the Head of his Church, and of all principalities and powers, and the authority of bishops and pastors to govern the Church under Christ, what does the Church suffer by denying the supremacy of the Pope, when sovereign princes and bishops may govern their several Churches, as well, or better, without him ? This, indeed, destroys the Papal monarchy ; but Christ is King still, and the Church is never the worse Church because it is not an universal monarchy, which Christ never intended it should be. But if we give the supremacy to the Pope, and he has no right to it by Christ's institution, this is an invasion

upon the right of all the Christian bishops in the world, makes it impossible for them to govern or reform their own Churches, whatever occasion there be, without leave from the Pope, which very thing has hindered the reformation of the Church of Rome itself these last ages, when it has been so earnestly pressed both by Christian princes and bishops of that communion ; witness the management of affairs in the Council of Trent. Nay, this is an invasion on the rights of sovereign princes, to set a superior over them in their own dominions, who can command their subjects with a more sacred authority ; and how fatal this may prove to princes, and what a snare and temptation to subjects, some examples of former ages may satisfy us.

Suppose we should be mistaken about the lawfulness of praying to saints, the Church of Rome herself does not pretend that it is necessary to do it, and therefore we want nothing necessary to salvation by not doing it ; and certainly our Saviour cannot think it any injury to his mediation, that we so wholly rely upon his intercession, that we desire no other advocates, and that we are so jealous of his glory, that we will not admit the most glorious saints to the least partnership with him ; and this will make him our advocate indeed, when he sees we will have no other : but if he be our only Mediator and Advocate by God's appointment, and his own purchase, let those who unnecessarily apply themselves to so many other mediators, consider how our only Mediator will like it.

Suppose it were lawful to worship God or Christ by images, which we think expressly forbid by the second Commandment ; yet will they say, "That it is an affront or injury to God and our Saviour, to worship them without images?" If that lovely idea we have of God in our minds, if the remembrance of what Christ hath done and suffered for us, make us truly and sincerely and passionately devout, what need have we of an image, which is pretended only to be a help to devotion, and therefore of no use to those who can be devout without it? But he who considers what God's jealousy means, must needs think it dangerous to worship the images of God and Christ, and the saints, for fear they should be forbid by the second Commandment, which all the wit of men can never prove that they are not.

Though Latin prayers were lawful in English congregations, who do not understand them, yet is it unlawful to pray in

English? Is it any dishonour to God, any injury to religion that men pray with their understandings? If true worship begins in the mind, and our understandings must govern affections, I should fear, that to pray without understanding what I prayed, would not be accepted by that God who is "Father of spirits," and must be "worshipped in spirit and truth."

If we believe, that Christ's once offering himself upon the cross, was a sufficient sacrifice, propitiation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, what injury do we to the sacrifice of Christ, though we do not believe that he is offered again every day in ten thousand masses? If we believe, that in the supper of our Lord we eat the sacramental body, and drink the sacramental blood of Christ, which, by his own institution, is really and effectually conveyed to us all the benefits of death and passion, as if we could eat his natural flesh and drink his blood, what injury does the Church suffer by denying transubstantiation? And if, when we approach his table, we worship Christ in heaven, sitting on the right hand of God, is not this as true an honour to our Saviour as to worship him under the species of bread? But if transubstantiation be false, what hazard does that man run, who worships a piece of bread, which the most learned Romanists themselves grant to be idolatry.

If we believe, that Christ alone has a judicial power to forgive sins, and that the Church has a ministerial authority to take in or shut out of the Church, which is the only state of pardon and salvation, and therefore is a ministerial remittance or retaining sins, and sufficient to all the ends of ecclesiastical authority; is not this as much pardon and forgiveness as any Christian has need of, though we deny that the priest has a judicial or pretorian authority to forgive sins, which is incompatible to any creature? For what can any man desire more, than to be put into a state of pardon and forgiveness in this world, and to be finally acquitted and absolved in the next? But if the priest have no such judicial authority to forgive sins, what a fatal mistake is it for men to rely on such an ineffectual absolution? What a miserable surprise will it be, for those who thought themselves pardoned by the priest to be condemned by Christ?

Though we deny such a place as purgatory, is not the fire of hell as good an argument to bring men to repentance?

does it lessen the mercies of God, or the hope of sinners, to say, that God remits all future punishments, when he remits the sin? But if the hopes of expiating their sins in purgatory, and of being prayed out of it, should embolden any man in sin, what a disappointment would it be to find their purgatory to be hell?

This is sufficient to shew, that we can suffer nothing by denying such doctrines as these, unless the causeless anathemas of the Church of Rome can damn us; but the hazard is so vastly great on the other side, the mistake will prove so fatal, if they be in a mistake, that nothing less than an infallible certainty can justify the prudence of such a choice, and therefore it is not fit for such fallible creatures, as we own ourselves to be, to venture on them. We are safe as we are, and we think it best to keep ourselves so, though we had no other reason for it, but that it is good to be safe.

Thirdly, Safe, I say, we are in rejecting these doctrines, unless they can prove, that by rejecting them we want something necessary to salvation. There are two things especially, wherein the Romanists think they have the advantage of us, and for the sake of which some Protestants are persuaded to forsake the communion of the Church of England for that of Rome. That they eat the natural flesh of Christ in the sacrament, and receive a judicial pardon of all their sins by the absolution of the priest; which we confess we do not. Now suppose it were necessary to salvation to eat the natural flesh of Christ, and that Christ would not forgive any man, who was not before forgiven by the priest, yet if these be the institutions of Christ we have them as well as they; and no man need go out of the Church of England for them.

If the words of consecration, "This is my body," do by the institution of Christ transubstantiate the bread into the natural flesh of Christ, these words must have the same effect, when pronounced by a priest of the Church of England as of the Church of Rome. And therefore, if this were the intention of our Saviour, to give us his natural flesh to eat, we do eat it as much as they; for we eat the consecrated elements, which are whatever Christ intended to make them by the words of consecration. For our not believing transubstantiation cannot hinder the virtue of consecration, if Christ have so appointed it; for the institutions of our Saviour do not change their nature with men's opinions about them. Thus penitents in

the Church of England may confess their sins to a priest, if they please, and receive absolution ; and if by the institution of our Saviour, there is a judicial absolution, then they have it, and need not go to the Church of Rome for it.

There are but two objections, that I know of, that can be made against this ; either that we have no true priests and bishops in the Church of England, and therefore we have no consecration of the elements ; or that the intention of the priest is necessary to consecration, and nothing more is done, than what the priest intends to do ; and therefore no priest can transubstantiate, but he who intends to transubstantiate.

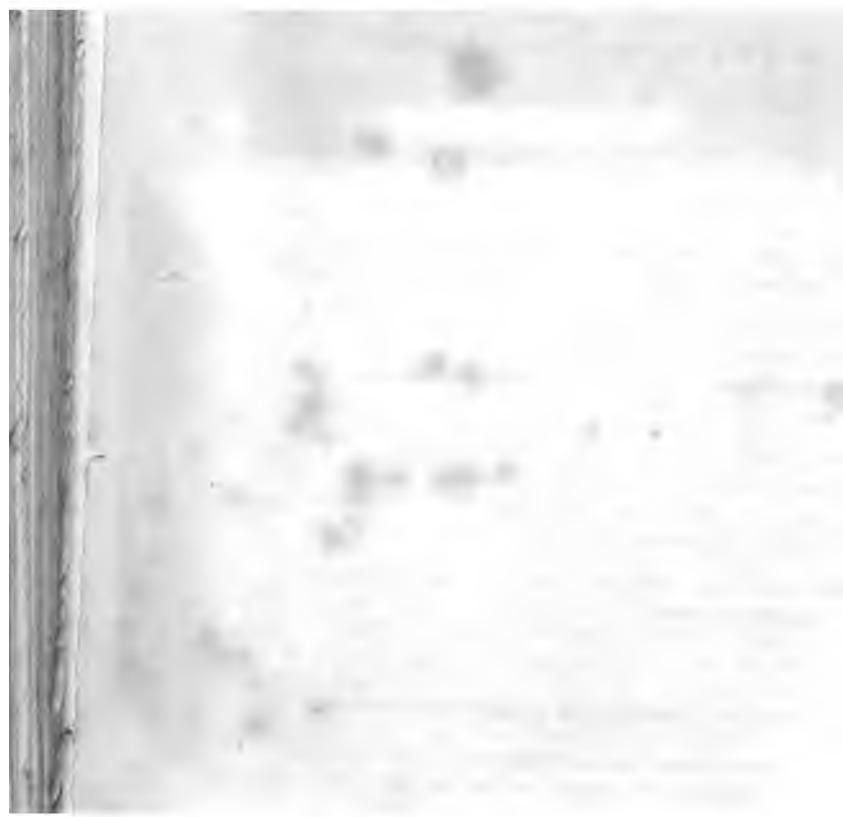
1. As for the first of these ; if there be no true priests and bishops in the Church of England, there are none in the Church of Rome ; for our bishops and priests derive their succession from those bishops, who received orders in the communion of the Church of Rome, and therefore have as good orders as they could give and as they themselves had ; and if we have as true bishops and priests as the Church of Rome, we must have as perfect sacraments as they also.

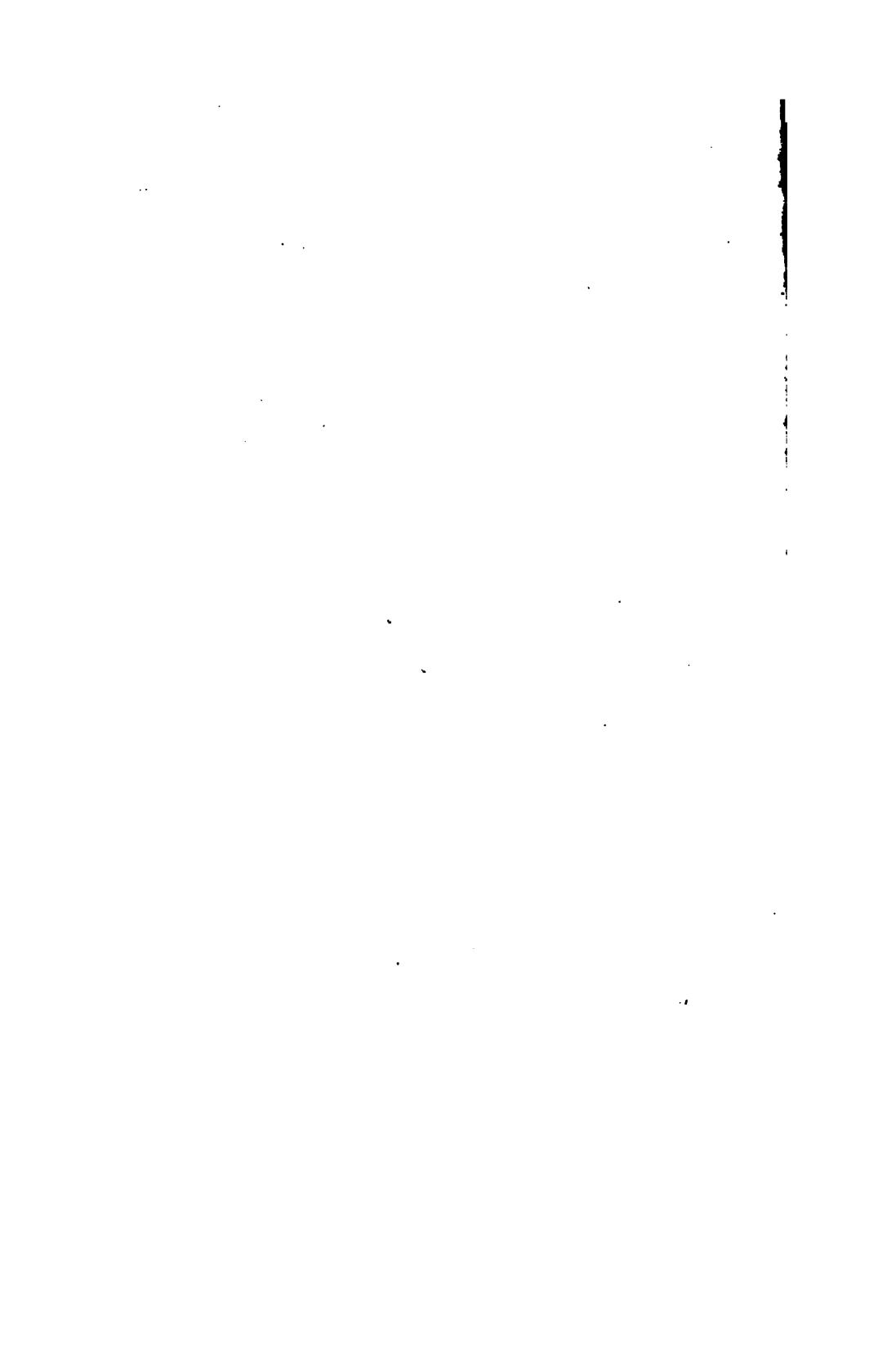
2. As for the intention of the priest, that in the Church of Rome signifies no more than to intend to do what the Church does ; and why is not intending to do what Christ does as good and perfect an intention as this ? And thus we all intend to do what Christ did ; which is all the intention that can be necessary to consecration, unless the private opinion of the priest can alter the nature of the institution. But the truth is, if the Church of Rome depends upon the intention of the priest for consecration, no Papist can ever be sure that the bread is consecrated, and then to be sure it is not transubstantiated ; and, therefore, I think, they may compound this business, and allow us transubstantiation, if we will allow it them. We want it not indeed, and care not for it ; but those who lay so much stress upon it, need not forsake the communion of the Church of England for that reason : at least have no reason to say, that we want any thing necessary to salvation.

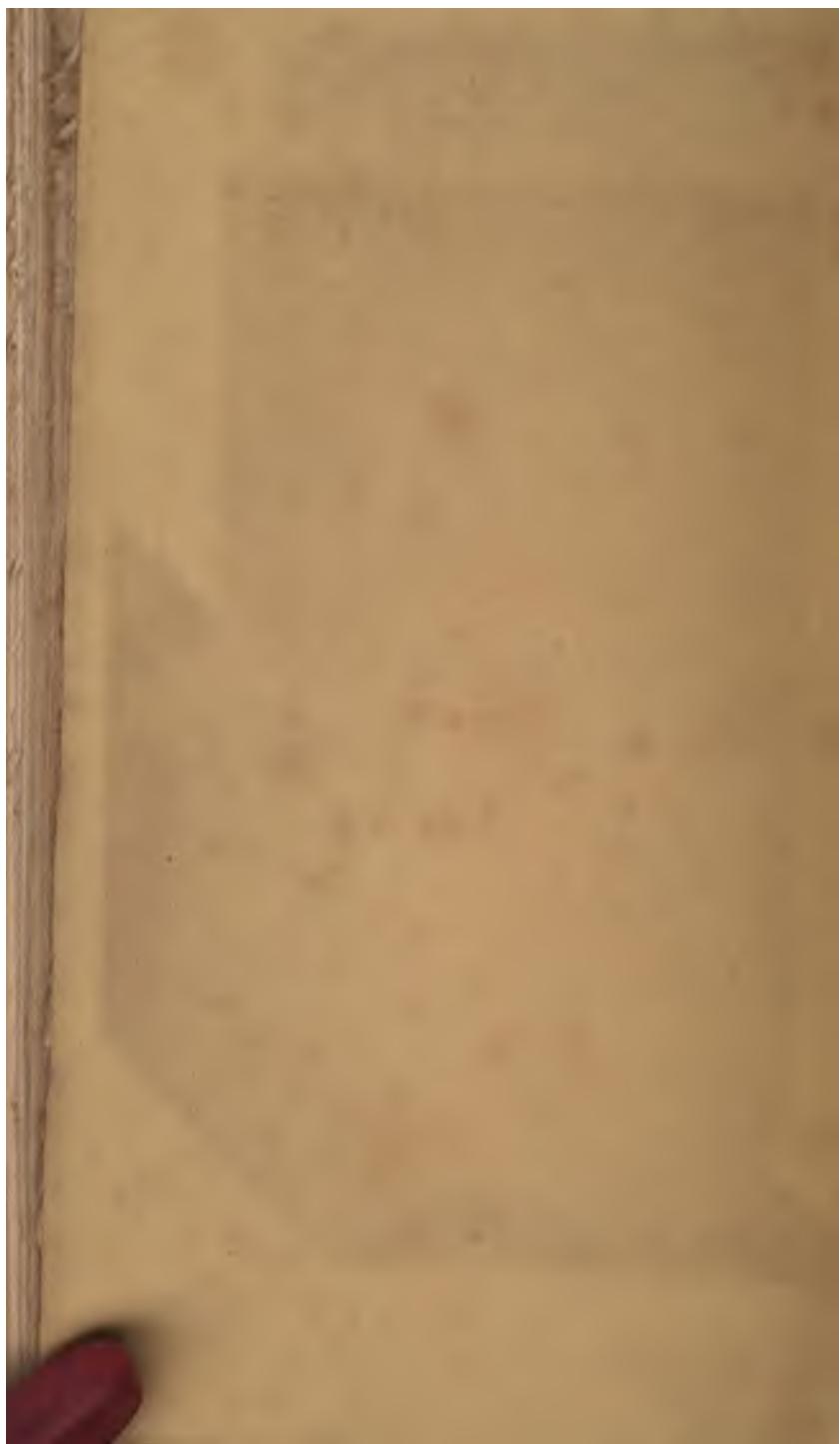
Let us but observe the institution of our Saviour, and we need not fear, but we shall receive all the spiritual blessings which Christ intended to convey to us in that sacrament ; which those can never be sure of, who do not observe the institution, but receive only a part of the Lord's Supper instead of the whole.

Were these things well considered, I persuade myself, no man would see any cause to forsake the communion of the Church of England, where he has all things necessary to salvation, without oppressing his faith with doctrines hard to be believed, or endangering his soul by doubtful and suspicious practices at best.

END OF VOL. IV.







UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 06386 2554

A 460081

